Ze!
The story of the world's coolest record label
Film & Music G2



Dance to the music Sly and the Family Stone's songs – ranked!



Friday
17 March 2023
£2.50
From £2.03 for subscribers

The Guardian
Newspaper of the year

Excoriating report condemns Met police over racist, sexist culture

Exclusive
Vikram Dodd
Police and crime correspondent

Britain's largest police force is riddled with deep-seated racism, sexism and homophobia and has failed to change despite numerous reviews urging it to do so, an official report will say.

The Casey report, due to be published on Tuesday next week, will excoriate the Metropolitan police, the Guardian has been told.

Senior government and policing figures are aware of its contents with one describing it as "horrible", another as "atrocious", while one source with knowledge of the findings told the Guardian it will make clear Britain's biggest force is in the "last chance saloon".

The report by Louise Casey was commissioned by the Met after Wayne Couzens abducted, raped and murdered Sarah Everard in March 2021 while a Met officer.

The report considers whether the force's failings result at least in part from institutional misogyny, institutional homophobia and institutional racism.

Casey will criticise the Met for failing to tackle its problems, which blight staff and the public, despite decades of warnings from previous official reports, and will emphasise her findings with a series of damning new case studies.

In 1999, a report by Sir William Macpherson into the failings that helped the racist killers of Stephen Lawrence escape justice for so long, identified institutional racism as a cause of some of the failings.

A decade later the Met said the label no longer applied, but Lady Casey will say significant problems continue, and will raise the question of what should happen to the Met if it cannot reform.

The final draft has been sent to the leadership of the Met and the government, leading to crisis talks in the last few days between Sir Mark Rowley, the force commissioner since September, and the home secretary, Suella Braverman, Whitehall sources say.

The Met's biggest recent disasters such as Couzens and the serial rapist David Carrick, another serving officer, were not one-offs, but symptomatic of how profound and serious its failings were allowed to become, the report will say. Poor past leadership will be criticised as pernicious cultures took hold and grew in the Met.

Couzens and Carrick 2 →



PHOTOGRAPH: YOAN VALAT/EPA

Fury as Macron forces through pension law

Chaotic scenes broke out in the French parliament yesterday as Emmanuel Macron used special powers to force through his unpopular plan to raise the state pension age from 62 to 64. **News** *Page 27* →

Unions hail pay victory as health secretary raises offer

Heather Stewart
Anna Bawden

Health unions hailed a historic victory yesterday after Steve Barclay made a significant new pay offer aimed at ending NHS strikes in England, in a climbdown that may embolden other unions at loggerheads with the government.

After months of strikes, involving thousands of NHS workers including nurses, ambulance staff and physiotherapists, the government ditched its claim that this year's pay deal could not be reopened, and offered a one-off bonus worth up to 8.2%.

The health secretary's offer – which most of the unions involved are recommending to members – also includes a permanent 5% rise from April, with the lowest paid receiving a bigger boost, to lift minimum pay in the NHS to £11.45 an hour.

However, questions later emerged about whether the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, was 5 →

VISIT…

LANZAROTE Caliente.COM

Inside *17/03/23*
Four sections every day

News and Sport

'Sickened as you all are'
The Cure frontman Robert Smith expresses his outrage over concert ticket prices
Page 9

Journal Outside G2
Opinions and ideas

Where are the extra nursery places promised by the Tories coming from?
Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett
Page 1

G2 Centre pullout
Features and arts

Alexander Skarsgård
After a career of brutes, creeps and weirdos, the star lets out his primal scream
Page 6

Save up to 27% with a subscription to the Guardian and the Observer
Visit theguardian.com/paper-subs

Weather
Page 36

Quick crossword
Back of G2

Cartoon
Journal, page 4

Cryptic crossword
Back of Journal

Contact

For missing sections call **0800 839 100**.
For individual departments, call the Guardian switchboard: **020 3353 2000**.
For the Readers' editor (corrections & clarifications on specific editorial content), call **020 3353 4736** between 10am and 1pm UK time Monday to Friday excluding public holidays, or email **guardian.readers@theguardian.com**.
Letters for publication should be sent to **guardian.letters@theguardian.com** or the address on the letters page.

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
The recycled paper content of UK newspapers in 2017 was 64.6%

Guardian News & Media, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU. 020-3353 2000. Fax 020-7837 2114. In Manchester: Centurion House, 129 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WR. Telephone Sales: 020-7611 9000. The Guardian lists links to third-party websites, but does not endorse them or guarantee their authenticity or accuracy. Back issues from Historic Newspapers: 0870-165 1470 guardian.backissuenewspapers.co.uk. Published by Guardian News & Media, Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9GU, and at Centurion House, 129 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3WR. Printed at Reach Watford Limited, St Albans Road, Watford, Herts WD24 7RG; Reach Oldham Limited, Hollinwood Avenue, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 8EP; Reach Saltire Ltd, 110 Fifty Pitches Place, Glasgow G51 4EA; and by Irish Times Print Facility, 4080 Kingswood Road, Citywest Business Campus, Dublin 24. No. 54,920, Friday 17 March 2023. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office ISSN 0261-3077.

News



◀ *Recruits to the Met police at their passing out parade in Hendon. The force has 'failed to change' despite many reviews* PHOTOGRAPH: ROB STOTHARD/GETTY

Culture of racism and sexism has taken hold in Met, says Casey report

Continued *from page 1*

were judged as fit to carry a gun and served in the same unit, the parliamentary and diplomatic protection command, which Casey highlights as suffering from unacceptably high levels of problematic behaviours.

Casey's team have sent so called "Maxwell" letters – which allow figures criticised in an official report to respond in advance of publication – to former Met leaders, including Cressida Dick.

The 300-page report is expected to criticise Dick's leadership from 2017 to 2022, as the Met's problems grew. But it will say the problems were apparent before her commissionership began. One supporter of Dick said she had been focused on reducing violent crime during her tenure.

Casey will say austerity – when the Conservative government from 2010 cut police budgets – had a damaging effect on the Met, with the force's neighbourhood policing suffering, as did relations with the communities it serves. Some Met officers and units have been left overworked.

The furious reaction to the scandal of Couzens – who was sentenced to a whole life term – prompted Dick to order the review from Casey in October 2021. In February 2022, she was ousted as commissioner with the London mayor, Sadiq Khan, saying he was not convinced she could lead the Met out of crisis.

The Casey report will say that while Couzens and Carrick – who committed 85 serious offences against women, including 48 rapes – were responsible for their crimes, clue after clue was missed about the dangers they posed.

In Couzens's case he exposed himself to women several times, but the Met bungled chances to identify him as a danger to women despite his crimes being reported to them.



▲ *Louise Casey will say austerity had a damaging effect on the police*

A draft of the Casey report has gone to Rowley and is said to have been met with shock at its findings and the further damage it may do to public confidence in the Met.

Prior to Carrick's conviction in January and details of the Met errors that left him free to attack women, confidence was already low. One senior source said Rowley's turnaround plan had a year to show some signs it was working. Another said he had two years to show progress.

The report follows Casey's first set of findings released in October 2022, which focused solely on the Met's disciplinary system, and revealed that too many complaints from officers and staff about their colleagues were not taken seriously. Rowley has vowed to change that and already promised reforms.

The last Casey report found officers and staff being fobbed off when they complained of wrongdoing, and reluctant to do so because they fear nothing will be done or they would face reprisals. It found officers suspected of serious offences including sexual assault and domestic abuse were allowed to escape justice, with the force's leader acknowledging hundreds of racist, women-hating and corrupt officers had been left in the ranks. The policing inspectorate last June placed the Met into special measures – which it calls "Engage" – over a series of failings.

Policing is awaiting two more official reports commissioned by the government – including one into the Couzens scandal, which is out later this year.

The Met faces another damning report into failings that left the serial killer Stephen Port free, and this month the police watchdog will announce whether a Met firearms officer should be referred to prosecutors over the shooting of the unarmed black man Chris Kaba last September.

Sketch
John Crace



Liz and Kwasi lead the way among Tory absentees

We need to talk about Liz. It's been the best part of five months since Truss was turfed out of office and she still hasn't recovered from the shame. Imagine being considered an even bigger liability than Boris Johnson by the Tory party.

Her public performances have been limited to a single appearance in the Commons and a 4,000-word intervention – part confessional, part cry for help – in the Daily Telegraph. A howl of pain from someone desperate for relevance. Most of it was just an unintelligible rant. But since then … nothing. Nada.

We also need to talk about Kwasi. If anything the former chancellor has been even more elusive than Liz since his defenestration.

One day Kwarteng was king of the rightwing libertarians. The man who did economics without the boring bits – who wants to bother with actually explaining how you're going to fund tax cuts? The next he was a political outcast. He hasn't shown his face in the Commons, let alone ventured into print.

But surely the time is now right for a comeback of sorts. After all, if not now then when? Only there was no sight of either him or Liz when the budget debate resumed at lunchtime yesterday. Neither was ready for redemption. Perhaps they never will be. Maybe their time has been and gone, with the Tories hastily retreating from their brief flirtation with Trussonomics.

They weren't the only absentees from the budget debate. Only 10 Tory backbenchers thought it worthwhile showing up. The rest had sloped off home. Whether it made any difference to their constituents was irrelevant.

Labour's Rachel Reeves is increasingly a class act. So perhaps some Tories had stayed away because they did not want their dreams shattered as the shadow chancellor took apart their fragile budget line by line. She started with a simple question: name one thing that works better now than it did 13 years ago? Silence from the Conservative ranks.

She quoted the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Few budgets survive their analysis. This one was no exception: the tax take was at its highest since the war, and the pension giveaway for the super-rich would do nothing to get more older people back into work. Who would have guessed? The UK would have the worst growth in the G7 this year and next.

> *Rachel Reeves started with a simple question, name one thing that works better than it did 13 years ago? Silence from the Conservatives*

All that Jeremy Hunt had been able to offer was that things would be marginally less shit than they otherwise might have been. Though that might be considered a huge win in Tory circles these days. For the rest of us, not so much.

Mel Stride, the work and pensions secretary, opened for the government. A thankless task. At least Jezza had the benefit of surprise. A day later and everyone knows the weaknesses in the budget, yet Stride had to repeat the same nonsense as if he believed in it. Maybe he does. Call it cognitive dissonance. He needs to believe or his world vision would fall apart.

Still, at least no one was really listening. And those that were would be more focused on the NHS pay deal. In January many of us were saying there would inevitably be a pay deal compromise between what the unions wanted and Rishi Sunak said was available. Surprise, surprise. That's what happened. What a waste of time. What a waste of goodwill. Time and again the government takes us for fools.

▼ *Jack Andrews, left, is from a horse racing family: his two sisters are also jockeys and his parents rode*
PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID DAVIES/PA WIRE



Towering over his fellow jockeys at 6ft 4in, is Jack Andrews the longest shot in racing?

Esther Addley

At 6ft 4in (1.93 metres), Jack Andrews is used to towering over his fellow jockeys, who tend to be at least a foot shorter than him.

But as he competes for his first Cheltenham festival win this week, the man who has been described as the tallest jockey in the world is determined not to let his unconventional stature slow him down.

There is no height limit for jockeys, but because they carefully watch their weight to help their racing, most are considerably shorter than Andrews. Keeping the scales at 10 stone 4lb (65.3kg), as he weighed in yesterday, was "a daily struggle", the 24-year-old said before his first race of the festival.

"It's probably got better as I've got older, I've learned to adapt my diet to suit me and do what works for me. It's definitely easier than it was a few years ago."

Andrews was raised in a racing family in Dunchurch, near Rubgy in Warwickshire - two sisters, Gina and Bridget, are jockeys and both his parents rode as amateurs. He always loved the sport, he said, and started racing at about 15 or 16, when he was about 5ft 10in.


▲ *Andrews at Cheltenham yesterday*

As he grew, however, "my weight ballooned a little bit when I was 18, 19 and I then had to really grab hold of myself and sort my diet out".

He added: "That's when it was toughest. Every year since then, I've learned to deal with it better."

Certainly the life of a top-level jockey - particularly a very tall one - is not for the faint hearted.

Each morning, before mucking out and an early ride, Andrews has a coffee, then yoghurt with fruit and granola - "to be fair I'd have that even if I wasn't dieting as a really like that".

> *'I have a bit of an advantage in that I can wrap my legs around the horses better than some can'*
>
> **Jack Andrews**
> *Jockey*

Lunch is "a Belvita bar with a banana and maybe a yoghurt pot".

For dinner he'll have another bar and some protein - chicken or fish.

It's the same every day - "yeah, I try to keep everything very similar" - and there is no alcohol at all, although he does permit himself a chocolate Hobnob with a cup of tea in the evenings. There's also a "cheat meal" once a week - "I am quite partial to a curry on a Saturday night.

"It's a constant struggle," he admitted. "I wouldn't go an hour through the day where I don't think about what my weight's like or what I'm going to eat next. So the only reason I do it is because I love [racing]. And the minute I stop, I would definitely stop the diet."

Perhaps surprisingly, Andrews said he doesn't believe that his frame disadvantages him once he's in the saddle. "If anything, I have a bit of an advantage in that I can wrap my legs around horses better than some people can." That can help with balance and control, he said.

"If you're very short, you're sometimes perched on top of their back and they can get the better of you. Whereas if you're a big lad you can … not manhandle the horse, but you're definitely on more of a level playing field with them.

"Its harder to look neat and tidy, like some other riders, but I pride myself on trying to be as neat and tidy as possible and not look out of place."

With 34 wins in 297 rides over the past five years, "I'd like to think that my riding is proving my capability now," he said. "I hope people see me as a good rider, rather than someone that's just tall." His total earnings in 2021-22, a career best, were £249,950.

Andrews has ridden at Cheltenham festival several times, but never won there - unlike both his sisters. Sadly his first ride yesterday on the 20-1 shot Anightinlambourn in the Kim Muir handicap chase was not to prove the breakthrough. He'll have another chance today, riding Not That Fuisse at 4.10pm.

I do, I do, I do, I do, I do like Abba, says macho ex-punk fan Bono

Kevin Rawlinson

Pressure to look macho led a young Bono to hide his love of Abba, the U2 singer admitted.

He said he lacked the courage to own up to liking the Swedish pop group at a time when his contemporaries were listening to punk, but was now able to see that he had, in fact, been thankful for the music all along.

Bono spoke alongside the U2 guitarist, The Edge, 61, during an hour-long special for BBC Radio 2's Piano Room, where they played songs from their new album Songs of Surrender.

Citing examples of musicians who would not necessarily have been considered cool by people with whom he associated in his youth, the singer said he had always appreciated the Bee Gees.

He said John Lennon had been vocal about his love of that group, before adding: "But there's a bit of a macho 'I don't want to own up to Abba.' But I'll tell you what, they're just better songs. You can't be empirical about everything in art."

Bono said the music of Abba was like "the national anthem for young mothers" when they were growing up around Dublin in the 1970s. "Certainly, at closing time at our local pub, often young women would sing Thank You for the Music, and I would sing it and I was very thankful for the music.

"But I was like, what is this phenomenon? This is before their musicals and all that. What is going on with Abba?"

The Edge said: "We're big fans of this Scandinavian band, appreciators of their work in a way that grew over years. We are fans of the Bee Gees, which people wouldn't have imagined.

"We're fans of lots of great songwriters who aren't necessarily seen as very hip, and I guess we're just appreciators of their work."


▲ *Bono says he hid his interest in Abba's music when he was younger*

Bono said he had told one of their recording band "that I didn't have the courage to own up to this next band when I was 16 in the middle of punk rock".

He added: "But I did get to the Bee Gees and I was ready to own up to (the songs) Massachusetts and Tragedy - I mean these are just crazy good."

Bono also recalled inviting Abba member and co-songwriter Benny Andersson on to the stage with U2 during a concert in Stockholm in 1992, joking that they had "murdered" the track Dancing Queen with their cover version.

Clip shows Russian jet colliding with US drone over Black Sea

The Su-27s spray the drone with fuel before the collision, which left it with a bent propeller, bottom right
PHOTOGRAPH: US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE









Dan Sabbagh
Martin Belam
Julian Borger

A remarkable video released by the Pentagon shows the moments before a Russian fighter crashed into a $32m (£26m) US Reaper drone after spraying it with jet fuel over the Black Sea.

The declassified footage shows an Su-27 Flanker jet making two exceptionally close passes of the uncrewed drone on Tuesday, spraying fuel in front of it, a harassment tactic that US experts say has not been seen before.

On the second pass, the Su-27 moves so close to the MQ-9 Reaper that the image briefly becomes pixelated, indicating a collision.

When the camera recovers, a bent propeller wing can be seen - damage sufficiently serious for the US air force to bring the drone down. It fell into international waters in the Black Sea, and senior Russian officials have said they hope to salvage it.

The head of US Central Command, Gen Erik Kurilla, said Russian planes had also become more aggressive towards US bases in Syria over the past two weeks, flying loaded with weapons "in an attempt … to be provocative".

"What we are seeing is an increase recently in the unprofessional and unsafe behaviour of the Russian air force in the region," Kurilla told the Senate armed services committee. "We have seen a significant spike since about 1 March," he added.

US officials briefed that the footage of the downing of the Reaper drone "absolutely confirms" there was a collision and dumping of fuel - but they added it did not confirm the Russian pilot's intent and whether it was intended to strike the Reaper.

By pausing the imagery it is possible to see that the Su-27 was armed with at least four missiles. The US has said the Reaper was unarmed, probably undertaking reconnaissance related to the conflict in Ukraine.

The Pentagon said the footage, which is about 40 seconds long, had been edited for length but showed events in a sequential order at the end of a sustained period of harassment by two Russian jets.

The US has previously said the drone was damaged after a pair of Su-27s had spent at least half an hour trying to disrupt it by dumping fuel on it and flying in front of it. Officials said earlier this week that the jets flew close to the drone 19 times, spraying jet fuel on the last three or four times.

Russia has denied US accusations that its jets acted recklessly and that its aircraft came into contact with the drone. It insists the drone crashed after making a "sharp manoeuvre" and it was flying towards Russian-occupied Crimea.

> *'What we are seeing is an increase in the unsafe behaviour of the Russian air force'*
>
> **Gen Erik Kurilla**
> *Senior US officer*

The video was released with the following caption: "Two Russian Su-27 aircraft conducted an unsafe and unprofessional intercept with a US air force intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance unmanned MQ-9 aircraft operating within international airspace over the Black Sea on 14 March 2023. Russian Su-27s dumped fuel upon and struck the propeller of the MQ-9, causing US forces to have to bring the MQ-9 down in international waters."

Justin Bronk, an aviation analyst with the Rusi thinktank, said: "The footage does show two extremely close and unprofessional passes at significant angles of attack, which is in line with the US claims that the Russian pilot involved in the collision was flying recklessly and accidentally collided with the MQ-9."

On Wednesday, the Russian ambassador to the US, Anatoly Antonov, called the incident a provocation. "We are concerned about the unacceptable activity of the US military in the immediate vicinity of our borders," he said, accusing the US of supplying intelligence to Kyiv.

The MQ-9 is a large remotely piloted aircraft, 11 metres long with a wingspan of more than 22 metres. It can be armed if necessary. The US says its primary use is as "an intelligence-collection asset" but it has frequently been used to carry out strikes in the "war on terror".

Poland to send MiG fighters to Ukraine in first for Nato

Julian Borger
Washington

Poland will become the first country to deliver fighter jets to Ukraine, marking a significant upward step in military backing for Kyiv before an expected counteroffensive.

The move, involving four Soviet-era MiG-29s as a first instalment in the next few days, could lead to other Nato members providing warplanes, a longstanding Ukrainian request.

The Polish president, Andrzej Duda, made the announcement in Warsaw. He said the first planes being handed over had been inherited from East Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The MiGs were coming to the end of their working lives after 30 years, he said, but were "still in working order".

Duda added that more MiGs were being serviced and repaired in preparation for delivery to Ukraine. In all, Poland has 28 MiG-29s which are to be replaced over the next few years by South Korean FA-50s and US F-35s.

Until now, Ukraine's backers in Nato have provided only spare parts for its fleet of Soviet-era warplanes, amid fears that delivering functioning planes to Ukraine would be seen by Moscow as direct participation in the war.

A year ago, Poland offered to hand over all its MiGs to America at the US airbase in Ramstein, Germany, so they could be passed on to Ukraine, but Washington rejected the plan.

Slovakia, Finland and the Netherlands have all said they would consider supplying Ukraine with warplanes.

The US and UK have so far refused to supply their F-16s and Typhoon combat aircraft, respectively, on the grounds that they require long, smooth runways and too much training and ground support to be of any short-term help to Ukraine.

However, the UK has offered to provide air cover for any eastern European country willing to supply Kyiv with Soviet-era jets.

Some European countries have adopted a policy of ambiguity over what they might provide should Russia sustain its war in Ukraine over the long term.

One senior European official said: "The experience of the last 12 months is that what was considered impossible, too dangerous, potentially escalatory, useless in terms of Ukrainian needs and so on, has proven to be absolutely necessary and urgent a few months later.

"So we are pragmatic and we think it is necessary to make sure that, seen from Moscow, there is a cloud of uncertainty about what kind of military support could come if this war was to span over several years."

Ukraine is expected to attempt a military breakthrough in the spring



MiG-29s during Nato exercises over Poland in October last year

and summer and is trying to build a well-equipped force with western-trained recruits and western-supplied weapons. But deliveries of Leopard tanks and other equipment have been slower than Kyiv had hoped, and its army has lost many of its experienced soldiers in the battle of attrition on the eastern front.

The Polish announcement came a day after a virtual conference of defence ministers from more than 40 countries supporting Ukraine to coordinate the next tranche of armaments shipments.

Sweden announced that it would be sending 10 Leopard tanks, and Norway and the US offered two more of their jointly developed Nasams anti-aircraft systems.

The US defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, said: "We're generating combat power to a degree that we believe will provide them opportunities to change the dynamics on the battlefield."

Strictly Come Dancing
Motsi Mabuse stumped by accents
Page 9



Iraq war: 20 years on
British families scarred by conflict
Page 16

Health unions hail pay victory after Barclay offer aimed at ending strikes

Continued *from page 1*

prepared to set aside new money to fund the pay rise.

A Treasury source suggested existing budgets allowed for a rise of 3.5% and that the Department of Health and Social Care would have to pay for the rest through efficiency savings, or bid for more funding in the coming months.

Ben Zaranko, a senior economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, said: "There must be a risk that the NHS is asked to make heroic efficiency savings to absorb these costs, struggles to do so, and instead has to be bailed out in six months' or a year's time. That would hardly lend itself to sensible financial planning."

The health secretary and his officials have been in intensive talks with unions to try to end months of industrial strife.

The government and the NHS Staff Council, which includes the unions, released a joint statement yesterday that said: "Both sides believe [the offer] represents a fair and reasonable settlement that acknowledges the dedication of NHS staff, while acknowledging the wider economic pressures currently facing the UK."

Unions including Unison, GMB and the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) said they would be recommending the new offer to their members, who would then vote on whether to accept it.

Rachel Harrison, a GMB national secretary, said: "Thanks to the strength and hard work of GMB's NHS members, the government has gone from refusing to talk about pay to putting an extra £2.5bn on the table for this year.

Unison's head of health, Sara Gorton, said: "It's a shame it took so long to get here. Health workers had to take many days of strike action, and thousands more had to threaten to join them, to get their union into the room and proper talks under way."

The RCN, which infuriated some of the other health unions by unilaterally entering talks with Barclay last month, said it had also secured a new pay structure for nurses, to come into force from 2024-25.

The RCN's general secretary, Pat Cullen, said her members' historic decision to take strike action had been vindicated. "After tough negotiations, there are a series of commitments here that our members can see will make a positive impact on the nursing profession, the NHS and the people who rely on it."

'The government has gone from refusing to talk about pay to putting an extra £2.5bn on the table'
Rachel Harrison
GMB national secretary

But Unite, which represents fewer NHS workers than most of the other unions involved in the dispute, said it would not be recommending the offer.

NHS employers welcomed the announcement but stressed that it must be properly funded by the Treasury.

Matthew Taylor, the chief executive of the NHS Confederation, said: "Any funding for the award should not come out of already-stretched NHS budgets, otherwise it will be a situation where we are robbing Peter to pay Paul, with patients bearing the costs."

Strike action continues in other public services including education, with the National Education Union demanding higher pay. Other NHS staff including junior doctors remain in dispute with the government, as do 100,000 civil servants.

Separate NHS disputes in Scotland and Wales appear close to resolution. GMB members in Scotland narrowly voted to accept the pay deal the Scottish government had offered, which equates to an average 6.5% increase in 2023-24. Other unions are recommending that their members accept.

In Wales, many strikes were paused in February after the Welsh government offered an additional 3% (half in the form of a one-off payment, half added to salaries) on top of the 4.5% that had already been paid.

Analysis
Heather Stewart



A great result for NHS staff – and a big climbdown for Downing Street

Yesterday's pay offer marks a significant victory for the thousands of NHS workers in England who have been on the picket lines in the past three months – and a big climbdown for Rishi Sunak's government.

Until just a few weeks ago, the government appeared determined to hunker down and stick to the script that this year's pay deal could not possibly be revisited, and finding extra cash for health workers would jeopardise the fight against soaring inflation.

Yet the end result of negotiations is a sizeable one-off payment for the current year worth up to 8.2% for the lowest-paid workers – and what appears likely to be an above-inflation pay rise of 5% for 2023-24. Union members will make the final decision about whether the deal is acceptable – and it certainly falls well short of the inflation-busting numbers some had hoped for. Paul Johnson, the director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, said that in real terms it still leaves NHS staff below where they were in 2021-22. But nevertheless, it is also considerably more than the government wanted to give.

Significant questions remain, too, about how the offer will be funded. But Sunak appears to have taken the decision that the NHS strikes were a problem worth expending political energy – and cold hard cash – to resolve.

Early in the dispute, ministers took a much more combative tone, suggesting striking health workers were irresponsible – with the business secretary, Grant Shapps, at one point appearing to accuse ambulance staff of putting patients' lives at risk.

Yet every time NHS workers went out on strike, public attention was once again drawn to the dire state of the health service. And the burnt-out nurses and ambulance workers interviewed outside hospitals, were hard to caricature as greedy or politically motivated.

Ultimately, Sunak appears to have decided there was little to be gained in continuing to take a tough line, in the hope either that public support would drain away, or NHS staff would lose heart.

The prime minister has form on belatedly caving in to political pressure long after the writing was on the wall. Last spring he delivered a financial statement widely regarded as inadequate to tackle the looming cost of living crisis. A few weeks later, he was back in the House of Commons, having another go.

During the Covid pandemic, he repeatedly signalled the end of the costly furlough scheme, before being pressured into extending it rather than risk hundreds of thousands of layoffs.



◀ *Every time NHS workers went on strike, public attention was drawn to the dire state of the health service*
PHOTOGRAPH: GUY BELL/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

Unions involved in the NHS strikes say the health secretary, Steve Barclay, grasped way back in January that the government's line of refusing to reopen this year's pay deal was never going to hold. But at that point he was unable to secure Downing Street's signoff.

Many thousands of union members elsewhere in the public sector will now be asking themselves whether they too can secure concessions from a government that appears to want to draw a line under a miserable winter of industrial strife.

There may be some clue as to how ready ministers are to compromise, in the fact that the one-off payments for this year won by the health unions are split into two – a 2% bonus and an additional "Covid recovery payment", worth about twice as much.

The government may be hoping that by tying this larger bonus to the horrors endured by many NHS workers during the pandemic, they can argue that other hard-pressed public sector staff, whether teachers or Border Force staff, don't deserve the same increase.

Ministers are also likely to be banking on the fact that many of those still on strike have considerably less public support than nurses. But after watching closely the way the NHS dispute has played out, the other public sector unions are unlikely to want to settle for much less.

Budget pension giveaway won't keep doctors in NHS, Hunt told

Richard Partington
Phillip Inman
Kiran Stacey

Jeremy Hunt is battling to justify his budget pensions giveaway to the richest 1% in the country after two leading economic thinktanks warned it may have no impact on NHS retention and open a vast new loophole for tax avoidance.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Resolution Foundation both said it was doubtful that the £1bn tax break would meet the chancellor's stated goal of retaining more senior doctors in the workforce, and that it may allow wealthy individuals to avoid inheritance tax.

Keir Starmer, the leader of the Labour party, renewed his attack on the surprise decision at the heart of the chancellor's budget, while promising to reverse it if his party won the next election. Starmer has said Labour would address the staffing crunch in the NHS by limited the tax break to doctors only, rather than extending it to all high earners.

He said: "It's very easy to bring in a tailor-made approach just for doctors - it was done for judges just a few years ago. And so the idea that a billion-pound giveaway to the richest 1% was necessary just falls apart the moment it is examined."

On a day of heavy criticism over the move, the chancellor insisted his budget had not served as a giveaway for the rich. Billions of pounds would help people in the cost of living crisis, Hunt said, adding: "I think it is a rather bizarre thing to say that when this is a set of measures that means in two weeks' time we are going to be spending a total of £94bn this year."

Ministers and backbench Conservative MPs pointed out that Labour had also promised to remove the cap for doctors, while arguing that Hunt's changes were quicker and less bureaucratic than singling out one sector of the economy.

However, Paul Johnson, the director of the IFS, suggested the tax break would not "play a big part, if any" in increasing the number of people in work. He added: "If the fundamental problem it was trying to address was doctors, then it was a rather large sledgehammer to crack a very small nut, and a billion-pound sledgehammer at that."



▲ *Keir Starmer said Labour would reverse the tax cut for all but doctors*

The Resolution Foundation said the policy amounted to a "large giveaway to a small number of higher earners who already benefit most from our approach to pension tax relief". It estimated that someone with a £2m pension pot would receive a tax cut of almost £250,000, which could encourage them to retire earlier than otherwise - undermining Hunt's stated goal.

"The beneficiaries from these reforms stand to gain large amounts, and they are heavily concentrated among the very rich," it said.

Of the roughly 80,000 non-retired people with pension pots in excess of £1m who are likely to benefit, almost all (96%) were among top 10% of earners in society.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), the government's independent economic forecaster, had estimated the change could increase employment by 15,000. However, the IFS said the estimate was "optimistic" at best and would still come with a costly price tag of about £100,000 a job. Official figures showed that as few as 8,600 pensions were subject to charges for exceeding the lifetime allowance in 2020-21, out of 600,000 retirement pots accessed for the first time.

The average household is expected to suffer the biggest two-year fall in real living standards since the 1950s. Real household disposable income is set to be no higher in 2027 than in 2019, and barely higher than a decade earlier.

Although inflation is forecast to fall rapidly this year, prices remain higher than two years ago for consumers, while a six-year freeze on income tax thresholds imposed by the government will drag millions of people into paying higher rates of tax.

According to the Resolution Foundation, taxes as a share of the economy were on track to hit 37.7% by the middle of the decade, a 70-year high, and the equivalent of nearly an extra £4,200 for every UK household.

The OBR estimates wage growth over the next five years will force 3.2 million people to pay tax for the first time, put 2.1 million into the higher-rate tax band, and add 350,000 additional-rate taxpayers.

Torsten Bell, the chief executive of the Resolution Foundation, said: "Our citizens' living standards are stagnant. We ask them to pay higher taxes, while cutting public services. No one budget could turn that around, but it's time Britain did."



Lifetime allowance Why was it scrapped and what will the consequences be?

Rupert Jones

What has the chancellor done?
Jeremy Hunt, the chancellor, has announced a massive boost to the amounts high earners can put away for their retirement tax-free. He abolished the pensions lifetime allowance, which is the limit on how much people can build up in their pots over their lifetime while still benefiting from the tax perks for doing so.

Up until now, an amount over £1.07m was subject to a tax charge of up to 55%. The change applies to all personal and workplace pensions, but excludes the state pension, and was due to be frozen at its current level until 2026.

The chancellor also increased the annual allowance - the most someone can save in a pension pot in a single tax year before having to pay tax - from £40,000 to £60,000.

Why did he make the changes?
The government says it had to act because the lifetime allowance had led many professionals, including NHS consultants and GPs, to retire early, and there have been predictions that more older public and private-sector employees would change their behaviour or retire early to avoid the penalties.

Hunt said that anyone in the NHS would say "doctors leaving the workforce because of pension rules is a big problem". He added: "There are many doctors who are worried about hitting their pension cap who are deterred from taking on extra hours. So it's not just the numbers who do hit the pension cap."

Why is the giveaway controversial?
The changes to pension allowances will cost the taxpayer vast sums. Official budget documents show that just abolishing the lifetime allowance will cost the Treasury a total of £2.75bn over five years (between 2023-24 and 2027-28). Add in the associated changes and the bill over five years tops £4bn.

Labour seized on a report from the Office for Budget Responsibility that indicated this costly shake-up was likely to keep only a few thousand doctors and other high earners working. The OBR is forecasting that the lifetime and annual allowance changes will "increase employment by about 15,000 by removing some financial disincentives to continuing in employment for those with large pension pots".

Effect on NHS staffing levels?
Dr Vishal Sharma, a cardiologist and BMA pensions committee chair, told BBC Breakfast the number of hospital consultants who had taken early retirement had tripled. Wesleyan, a specialist financial services firm for doctors, teachers and dentists, said its research had shown that a fifth of doctors had already left the NHS pension scheme because of these tax problems.

Who stands to gain?
The change paves the way for some individuals to build up multimillion-pound funds. Someone paying in £60,000 a year for 30 years could build up a retirement pot worth £3.5m,

▼ *The chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, outside the BBC HQ the morning after he delivered the spring budget*
PHOTOGRAPH: BEN CAWTHRA/LNP



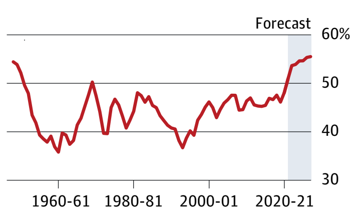
with only income tax to pay on withdrawals above the tax-free cash entitlement, said Tom Selby, at the investment platform AJ Bell.

The financial services firm Aon said that if someone saved £60,000 a year for 40 years, their ultimate pot, including investment returns, could be many times the current lifetime allowance. "Of the order of £9m" before allowing for inflation. The changes also amount to a huge inheritance tax break. Defined contribution pensions can be a tax-efficient way of passing on wealth as they are usually exempt from inheritance tax.

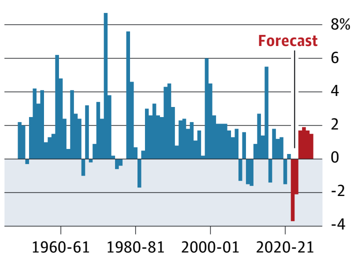
Who does not gain?
Aside from the majority of taxpayers who will pick up the tab but will not benefit? Some other types of investments popular with rich people may now lose out if wealthy individuals decide to max out what they pay into pensions. M&G Wealth said the changes could lead to "a reduction in attractiveness of other tax-incentivised vehicles, such as venture capital schemes".

What does it mean for the Tories?
Labour hopes this will snowball, like the huge row in 2022 over the plan to abolish the 45% top rate of income tax on earnings above £150,000. That was announced by the Truss government but following widespread anger abandoned. Labour will seek to force a Commons vote next week on Hunt's move. The shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, said "this gilded giveaway is the wrong priority at the wrong time for the wrong people". A Labour government would reverse it.

Tax as a share of GDP is at its highest level since the second world war



Real household disposable income to fall by the largest amount since the 1950s
Year-on-year per capita growth



Source: IFS

Labour Reeves condemns 'handout to richest 1%'

Kiran Stacey
Political correspondent

Rachel Reeves claimed yesterday that Jeremy Hunt's budget was "unravelling before our eyes" as Labour attacked the chancellor for handing a tax cut to the wealthiest with his changes to pensions.

In a 20-minute speech in the Commons, the shadow chancellor accused Hunt of offering "a huge handout to the richest 1% of pensions savers" while doing little to alleviate what is forecast to be the biggest living standards crunch since records began. Speaking during the second day of the budget debate, Reeves said the pension changes, which will eliminate the higher tax rate on pension savings for people who have saved more than £1m, were "the wrong priority, at the wrong time, for the wrong people".

"Yet again, working people and businesses, the key to our economic success, have been put at the bottom of the pile," she said.

Reeves promised Labour would reverse the measure if it won the next election. But while she reserved her most vociferous criticism for the pension savings tax cut, she spent much of her time focusing on the Conservatives' economic legacy after 13 years in government.

"Is anything in Britain working better today than it did when the Conservatives came to office? The answer … is a resounding no," she said, adding: "This is a government that is struggling to paper over the cracks after their 13 years of neglect and shoddy workmanship."

Mel Stride, the Conservative work and pensions secretary, defended the budget and specifically the pensions savings tax break, arguing it was the quickest way to make sure doctors were incentivised to stay in their jobs rather than retiring early. "This policy will mean that thousands upon thousands of additional highly skilled people working in the National Health Service will stay in the National Health Service where we need them as a consequence."



▲ *Rachel Reeves said Labour would reverse the tax cut on pension savings of more than £1m if elected* PHOTOGRAPH: TAYFUN SALCI/ZUMA PRESS WIRE/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

> *'This is a government struggling to paper over the cracks after 13 years of neglect'*
>
> **Rachel Reeves**
> *Shadow chancellor*

He highlighted many of the budget proposals designed to encourage people back to work, including more support for childcare and changes to benefits to help people with disabilities work more hours.

The Conservatives on Wednesday scrapped the work capability assessment, which assesses whether a disabled person is fit to work, in a move Hunt said would make it easier for disabled people to seek employment. "We on this side will never forget the power of work to change lives, to give to each and every one of us. That vital chance, that gift that employment brings."

A more free-market defence of the budget came from Jackie Doyle-Price, who was a minister in Truss's government. Doyle-Price told MPs: "When we make a change to the pension tax regime we're not giving money away to the rich, we're letting them keep more of what they earn and that's the right thing to do."

Analysis
Larry Elliott



Measures that mean stagnant living standards for higher taxes

As an advertising slogan, "pay more get less" has limited appeal and so Jeremy Hunt was keen to focus on other bits of his budget as he did the customary tour of the TV and radio studios to explain the reasons behind his tax and spending decisions.

Two leading thinktanks felt no such reticence; the Resolution Foundation and Institute for Fiscal Studies, in their post-budget analysis, highlighted that families were paying more in tax but getting less back from the state in return.

The pensions tax break for the 1% was in contrast to the whopping increases faced by basic rate and higher rate taxpayers owing to the six-year freeze on tax allowances. Income tax thresholds have been frozen until 2027-28, so the average basic rate taxpayer will eventually pay £800 a year more in income tax, while a higher rate taxpayer will pay an extra £1,700.

If tax allowances don't rise in line with earnings growth, fiscal drag means people on lower incomes start paying tax, and more people are affected by the 40% rate. The IFS says that freezing the basic rate threshold at £12,570 and the higher rate threshold at £50,270 will mean 1.7 million more basic rate taxpayers and 1.2 million people dragged into the 40% band.

Fiscal drag has two big effects. First, it will mean that by 2027-28 tax as a share of national income will rise to just shy of 38%. That's a rise of more than four percentage points on its pre-pandemic level and the highest since the second world war. Second, more personal tax means less money to spend.

38%
Near proportion of tax as a share of national income for 2027-28 - the highest since the second world war

Despite the slightly rosier outlook for growth, living standards are on course for their biggest two-year fall since the 1950s.

The IFS said real disposable household income, a measure of living standards, will be £25,000 by 2027, little changed from the level two decades earlier. It would be more than £10,000 higher had the trend from 1948 to 2008 continued.

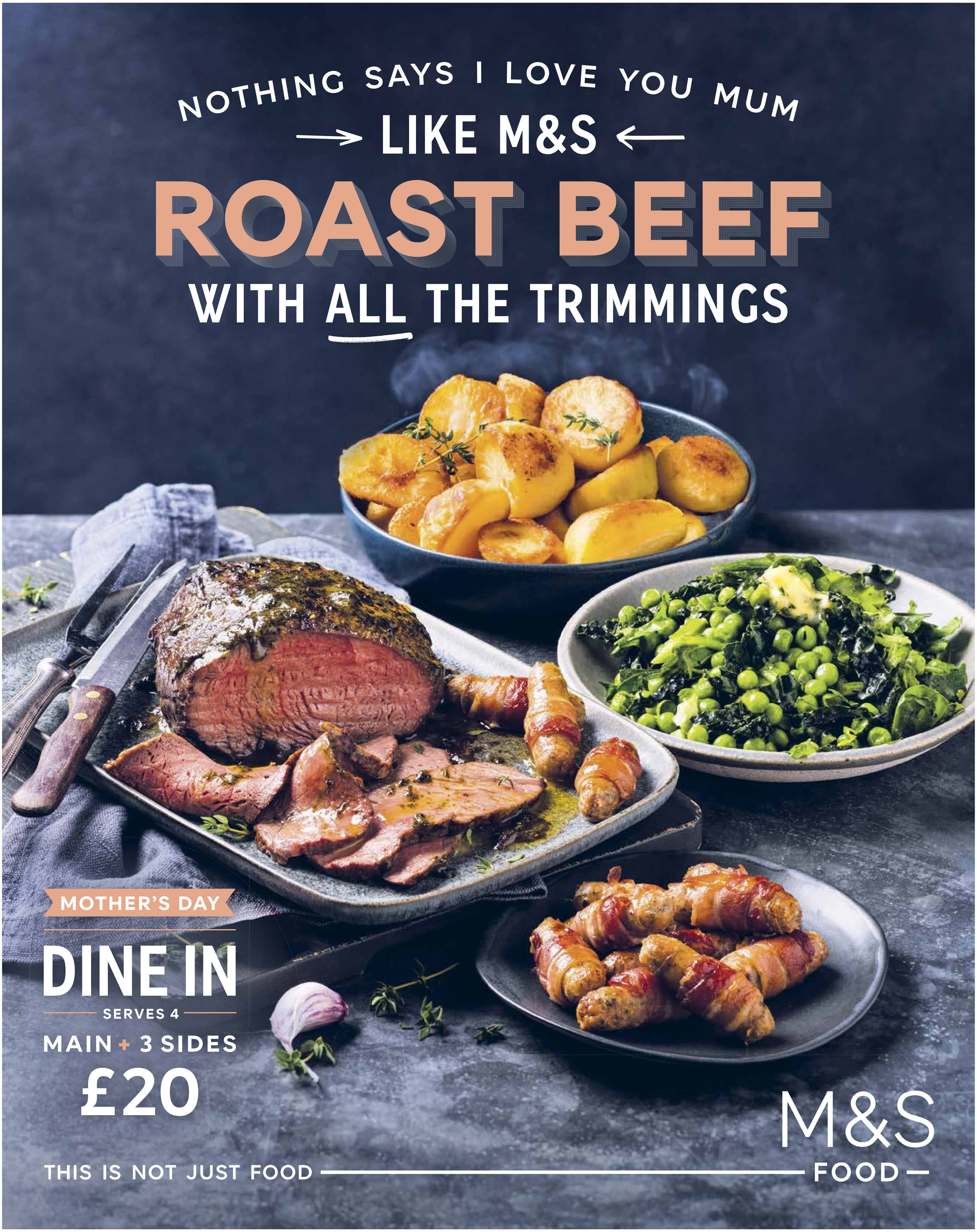
The UK is on course for another lost decade for living standards, according to the IFS director, Paul Johnson. And on course for a new era of austerity.

The chancellor announced more money for childcare and the MoD in his budget, and spending on the NHS will continue to rise in real terms. But other departments face a renewed squeeze. The Resolution Foundation calculated that there would be cuts of 10% in day-to-day spending over the next five years.

Hunt said the near £400bn spent by the government mitigating the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic made higher taxes and spending restraint unavoidable.

Torsten Bell, the Resolution Foundation's director, put it another way. "We are investing too little, growing too slowly. Citizens' living standards are stagnant. We ask them to pay higher taxes, while cutting public services."

Serving suggestion shown. Offer is main + 3 sides from a selection for 4 people for £20. Offer available from 15-19 March in England, Scotland and Wales, and 16-19 March in Northern Ireland. Selected stores only – subject to availability. Prices may vary in selected stores. Prices correct at time of publication. Excludes any personalised customer or employee promotions that may be offered. See individual tickets for details. © Marks and Spencer plc.



Cure frontman Robert Smith says he is 'sickened' by Ticketmaster fees

Laura Snapes

Robert Smith of the Cure has told fans he is "as sickened as you all are" after they had complained of Ticketmaster's additional fees on sales of tickets for the band's US tour.

The band purposefully kept ticket costs affordable, with some as low as $20 (£16). But fans shared screenshots of Ticketmaster shopping baskets with varying fees across different venues: one image showed combined fees that exceeded the cost of a $20 ticket – each subject to a service fee of $11.65 and a facility charge of $10, plus an overall order processing fee of $5.50.

The fees were levied by the ticket sales company as part of its verified fan programme, which allows fans to register for an advance sale and is said to prevent tickets getting into the hands of touts or bots.

"To be very clear: the artist has no way to limit them," Smith wrote in a trademark caps lock tweet. "I have been asking how they are justified. If I get anything coherent by way of an answer I will let you all know."

Earlier in the week, Smith said the band had chosen to use the system in order to combat scalping, but had declined to participate in the company's dynamic pricing and platinum ticket schemes.

"We had final say in all our ticket pricing for this upcoming tour, and didn't want those prices instantly and horribly distorted by resale," Smith tweeted on 15 March, saying that the band had been told that the US resale business is a "multi-billion $ industry".

He continued: "We didn't agree to the 'dynamic pricing'/'price surging'/'platinum ticket' thing … because it is itself a bit of a scam? A separate conversation." In a subsequent tweet, he called it "a greedy scam – and all artists have the choice not to participate … if no artists participated, it would cease to exist".

> *'To be very clear: the artist has no way to limit Ticketmaster's fees. I have been asking how they are justified'*
>
> 
>
> **Robert Smith**
> *The Cure*

Musicians such as Bruce Springsteen and Taylor Swift have used the dynamic pricing system, under which individual tickets have gone for thousands of dollars. In February, the Springsteen fanzine Backstreets closed down after 43 years in protest at ticket costs.

Smith concluded: "We know it's a far from perfect system – but the reality is that if there aren't enough tickets on sale, a number of fans are going to miss out whatever system we use; at least this one tries to get tickets into the hands of fans at a fair price." He joked that the band should "play more/bigger shows".

It is the latest example of fan dissatisfaction with the Ticketmaster sales model. In November, it cancelled the general sale for tickets for Swift's Eras tour – which starts in the US on 17 March – because demand for the verified fan sale had left "insufficient remaining ticket inventory", it said, citing "historically unprecedented demand".

Swift called the situation "excruciating", and said: "I'm not going to make excuses for anyone because we asked them, multiple times, if they could handle this kind of demand and we were assured they could" in a statement posted to Instagram.

The debacle prompted the US congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to call for a breakup of the 2010 Ticketmaster and Live Nation merger, calling it a "monopoly".

In January, the US Senate held a hearing about the company to hear testimony about ticket sales, monopolisation, resale markets and Ticketmaster's influence on the live music industry.

Two groups of Swift fans sued Ticketmaster over the sales fiasco, alleging that it engaged in "fraud, price-fixing and antitrust violations" and intentionally misled fans.

In December 2022, it also cancelled hundreds of tickets for a show by the Puerto Rican superstar Bad Bunny in Mexico City, claiming that an "unprecedented" number of fake tickets had overwhelmed its system, leading to valid ticketholders being denied entry.

Federal records show that spending on lobbying by Ticketmaster's parent company, Live Nation jumped from about $250,000 in 2018 to nearly $1.3m in 2021 and that its 2022 figures could top that peak.

The Cure are expected to return with Songs of a Lost World, their 14th studio album, this year. It will be their first since 4:13 Dream in 2008.

Ticketmaster was contacted for comment.

▼ *Motsi Mabuse speaks several languages, including German, Afrikaans and Setswana*

PHOTOGRAPH: GUY LEVY/BBC/PA



Strictly speaking, I need northern accents to be translated, says Mabuse

Alexi Duggins

The Strictly Come Dancing judge Motsi Mabuse has claimed she can't understand northern accents, despite speaking five languages. In the latest episode of the Off Menu podcast, she said regional dialects from the north of England are borderline unintelligible to her.

"The thing is, you [Britons] all speak differently. Every time I'm in the country I really have to concentrate. Some people … I'm like, 'Are we speaking the same language?' There's a lot of accents here."

During a chat about how she sometimes struggles to ensure she's speaking the correct language while on the BBC reality TV show, she claimed that the accents of people from the north are so difficult for her that she requires her fellow judge Craig Revel Horwood to translate.

> *'I'm always asking Craig. I'm just trying to understand'*
>
> **Motsi Mabuse**
> *Strictly judge*

"I really struggle with people that come from the north. I'm like, can you please translate at this point? It's so strong, I just don't understand, really. I'm being honest."

A particular problem, apparently, was AJ Odudu, a contestant from series 19. In response to a question about whether she struggled with Odudu's Blackburn dialect, Mabuse responded: "Yes! Yes, yes, yes. But there have been quite a few people from the north, so I'm always asking Craig. I'm just trying to understand … but it's not easy."

Mabuse lives in Germany, where she appears on its version of the dance competition. She commutes to Britain every week during the Strictly live shows. The five languages she speaks are English, three South African languages, including Afrikaans and Setswana, and German – the latter of which she has occasionally slipped into during broadcasts.

"It's happened a few times," she said. "Plus I have that South African accent, so it's a complete mess."

Oldham Coliseum confirms its closure after losing arts funding

Josh Halliday
North of England correspondent

Arts bodies have decried the "devastating" news that one of Britain's oldest theatres, Oldham Coliseum, will close in two weeks after being stripped of its government funding.

The 138-year-old theatre confirmed "with deep sadness" yesterday that it would bring down the curtain for the final time next weekend. The future of the venue had been under threat for weeks after Arts Council England (ACE) axed its £1.8m grant as part of a nationwide funding review.

The Coliseum, which helped launch the careers of some of the country's best known actors, is the biggest theatre outside London to lose its ACE funding from April. Stars including Maxine Peake, Jason Manford and Suranne Jones have decried ACE's decision, saying it would leave "such a hole" in the region and would further make the arts something that was "for the elite".

The loss of its ACE subsidy came despite Oldham being earmarked as a priority for government's levelling up drive for culture. The Coliseum said its final production would take place next Saturday 25 March and that it would close its doors for good on 31 March.



▲ *The 138-year-old theatre will close on 31 March after losing £1.8m grant*

It said the "outpouring of love" had been "overwhelming, demonstrating the Coliseum's impact on the communities of Oldham and further afield". Switch MCR described the news as "devastating," while the education group North West Drama said it was "incredibly sad".

ACE described the news as "upsetting for many and devastating for its staff". It said Oldham would still receive a £1.8m subsidy but that this would not go to the Coliseum, where more than 67,000 people have watched shows since it reopened after the Covid-19 lockdown in June 2021.

ACE said it was providing funding to pay full redundancies and honour outstanding contracts.

Fresh water demand will outstrip supply by 40% at end of decade, say experts

Fiona Harvey
Environment editor

The world is facing an imminent water crisis, with demand expected to outstrip the supply of fresh water by 40% by the end of this decade, experts said on the eve of a crucial UN water summit.

Governments must urgently stop subsidising the extraction and overuse of water through misdirected agricultural subsidies, and industries from mining to manufacturing must be made to overhaul their wasteful practices, according to a landmark report on the economics of water.

Nations must start to manage water as a "global commons" because most countries are highly dependent on their neighbours for water supplies, and overuse, pollution and the climate crisis threaten water supplies globally, the report's authors said.

Johan Rockstrom, the director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and a lead author of the report, said the world's neglect of water resources was leading to disaster. "The scientific evidence is that we have a water crisis. We are misusing water, polluting water, and changing the whole global hydrological cycle, through what we are doing to the climate. It's a triple crisis."

Mariana Mazzucato, an economist and professor at University College London, also a lead author, added: "We need a much more proactive, and ambitious, common good approach. We have to put justice and equity at the centre of this, it's not just a technological or finance problem."

The report marks the first time the global water system has been scrutinised comprehensively and its value to countries – and the risks to their prosperity if water is neglected – laid out.

As with the Stern review of the economics of the climate crisis in 2006 and the Dasgupta review of the economics of biodiversity in 2021, the report authors hope to highlight the crisis in a way that policymakers and economists can recognise. Many governments still do not realise how interdependent they are when it comes to water, according to Rockstrom.



▲ *Drought-stricken reservoirs, such as this one in West Yorkshire last August, will become more common*
PHOTOGRAPH: DANNY LAWSON/PA

Most countries depend for about half of their water supply on the evaporation of water from neighbouring countries – known as "green" water because it is held in soils and delivered from transpiration in forests and other ecosystems, when plants take up water from the soil and release vapour into the air from their leaves.

The report sets out seven key recommendations, including reshaping the global governance of water resources, scaling up investment in water management through public-private partnerships, pricing water properly and establishing "just water partnerships" to raise finance for projects in developing and middle-income countries.

> ***'There will be no agricultural revolution unless we fix water. Behind all these challenges there's always water'***
>
> **Johan Rockstrom**
> *Lead report author*

More than $1tn (£830bn) of subsidies globally go to agriculture and water each year and these often fuel excessive consumption. Water leakage must also be urgently addressed, the report found, and restoring freshwater systems such as wetlands should be another priority.

Water is fundamental to the climate crisis, and the global food crisis. "There will be no agricultural revolution unless we fix water," said Rockstrom. "Behind all these challenges we are facing, there's always water, and we never talk about water."

Many of the ways in which water is used, for example in sewage systems are in need of change. The UN water summit, led by the governments of the Netherlands and Tajikistan, will be held in New York on 22 March. It will be the first time in more than 40 years the UN has met to discuss water.

Henk Ovink, a special envoy for international water affairs for the Netherlands, said the conference was crucial.

"If we are to have a hope of solving our climate crisis, our biodiversity crisis and other global challenges on food, energy and health, we need to radically change our approach in how we value and manage water," he said.



One in five pupils are classed as persistently absent from school

Richard Adams
Education editor

One in five pupils in England were classed as persistently absent during the last school year, with Covid and other illnesses the biggest contributors to classroom absence rates among children soaring compared with pre-pandemic years.

The figures from the Department for Education (DfE) showed the aftermath of the Covid pandemic continued to significantly affect state school attendance into the summer of 2022. The national absence rate of 7.6% was well above the rates of 4%-5% seen before the pandemic.

Illness accounted for nearly 60% of the absences, including those off having tested positive for Covid, with the proportion of children absent through illness close to twice the rate seen before the pandemic.

The DfE also reported an increase in unauthorised absences, from 1.3% in 2020-21 to 2.1% in 2021-22.

Lengthy absences saw 22% of state school pupils missing more than 10% of sessions, about 19 days or more during the school year, leading to them being classed as "persistently absent" under the DfE's definitions.

While children eligible for free school meals were absent for 37% of sessions, the fastest increase came among children not eligible, whose absence rate more than doubled to 17.5% compared with the previous two school years.

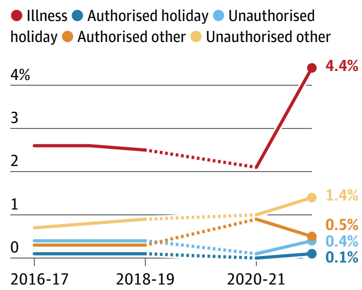
Unauthorised holidays played no role in the increases in absence, despite speculation that parents have become more willing to take their children away during term-time.

The DfE's figures showed that unauthorised holidays amounted to just 0.4% of sessions last year, the same rate recorded between 2016 and 2020.

A spokesperson for the DfE said the "vast majority" of children were in school and learning.

"We work closely with schools, trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities to identify pupils who are at risk of becoming, or who are persistently absent, and working together to support those children to return to regular and consistent education," the DfE said.

School absence rates due to illness soared in England last year



Source: DfE. Note: no data for 2019-20

After concerns were raised at the high and persistent levels of absence since the pandemic and school-related closures, the DfE has started a number of initiatives.

These include hiring dedicated attendance advisors, creating "attendance hubs" to share best practice, and pilot programmes such as one in Middlesbrough, aiming to tackle underlying causes such as bullying or mental health issues by giving support to persistently and severely absent pupils.

However, more recent data from the current academic year suggests that illness and unauthorised absences remain a problem for many schools, with head teachers saying that a "cultural shift" means that parents are more likely to allow children to stay home.

Statistics compiled by FFT Education Datalab, a non-profit independent research organisation, found that a third of 15-year-olds had been persistently absent from classrooms in the autumn term of the current school year.

Rachel De Souza, the children's commissioner for England, recently claimed that schools were "seeing a huge amount of Friday absence that wasn't there before" because of parents working from home.

Warning over buildings

School leaders in England are concerned that the government is cutting back on school building refurbishment and repairs despite the Department for Education's recent disclosure that there was a "critical – very likely" risk of buildings collapsing.

The NASUWT teachers union said the government's latest budget has cut the DfE's capital expenditure limits by £400m, with the £6.3bn allocated in last November's autumn statement shrinking to £5.9bn in budget documents published this week.

It comes amid longstanding concern over the safety of England's school estate, with buildings from the 1960s and 1970s nearing the end of their structural life and many riddled with asbestos and other dangerous materials.

Patrick Roach, the NASUWT's general secretary, said: "Now is the time for greater investment in school buildings, not less, with the warnings that some school buildings are at risk of collapse."

The DfE was approached for comment. Richard Adams

Visits to UK's top attractions still 23% down on pre-Covid attendance

Esther Addley

Visitor numbers at the UK's leading attractions are still almost a quarter lower than before the pandemic, thanks to a perfect storm of Covid, Brexit, energy prices and the wider financial crisis, according to the sector's trade body.

Figures published yesterday by the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions show that while the number of visits to its sites rose by 69% in 2022 compared with the year before, this was still 23% lower than in 2019.

Bernard Donoghue, the organisation's director, described the annual increase as "probably as good as we could hope for", given the unprecedented challenges facing its members, which include the UK's most famous museums, galleries, cathedrals and parks.

"We as a sector have never been hit by so many variables, which are completely out of our control, all at the same time," he told the Guardian. "Not just Covid, but also the cost of living crisis, energy costs and the hangover of Brexit.

"Staffing and recruitment is one of the greatest challenges to tourism and hospitality. Some of that great challenge is replacing people … who left during Covid – but partly because of Brexit – to go back to their home countries in the EU or further abroad.

"That whole basket of uncontrollable variables has never hit us like that before. So it's still remarkable that our visitor attractions are growing, surviving, thriving on a daily basis, in spite of all of that."



▲ *Britain's most visited indoor attraction last year was the Natural History Museum with 4.6m visitors*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALAMY

While some attractions, particularly those that are free and those in London, saw strong year-on-year growth, the picture was mixed elsewhere in the country. The capital saw the biggest growth on average, with visits up by 152%, with Scotland up by 128% and Northern Ireland up 120% on 2021.

69%
Rise in attendance at leading tourist sites last year – still not enough to hit pre-pandemic totals

The most visited indoor attraction – and second most visited overall after Windsor Great Park – was the Natural History Museum, which saw a 196% increase in visitors to 4.6 million in 2022. The British Museum, up 209% with 4.1 million, moved from sixth place to third.

The National Museum of Scotland, up 199% to almost 2 million visitors, was in ninth place overall. Visitors to Titanic Belfast leapt by 177% to 624,000. In London, the ongoing scarcity of visitors from China and the far east had been a significant challenge in 2022, said Donoghue, adding that, elsewhere, paid-for attractions, and particularly those outside city centres, had felt the brunt of high petrol prices and the financial crisis.

"When petrol costs were a real issue, city centres did well. They could rely on people getting there from public transport. But remote places were being affected by people saying, 'actually, it's going to cost me quite a lot of money to drive there.'"

He welcomed the extension of tax relief for museums and galleries in this week's budget, but called on the government for greater support with energy costs – "the greatest threat to our financial sustainability" – as well as a reduction in VAT for visitor attractions, and a renewed marketing push for overseas tourists.

"I have to say, the global media coverage of the Queen's funeral and the forthcoming coronation will help that enormously," he said.

Rolls-Royce wins funding for moon base nuclear reactor

PA Media

Rolls-Royce has received funding from the UK Space Agency to develop a nuclear reactor for a moon base.

The project will look into how nuclear power could be used to support a future base on the moon for astronauts.

Scientists and engineers at the British company are working on the Micro-Reactor programme to develop technology that will provide power needed for humans to live and work on Earth's natural satellite.

All space missions depend on a power source to support systems for communications, life-support and science experiments. Experts suggest nuclear power could dramatically increase the length of lunar missions.

The UK Space Agency has announced £2.9m of new funding for the project, which will deliver an initial demonstration of a UK lunar modular nuclear reactor. This comes after a £249,000 study funded by the UK Space Agency in 2022.

Science minister George Freeman said: "Space exploration is the ultimate laboratory for so many of the transformational technologies we need on Earth: from materials to robotics, nutrition and cleantech. As we prepare to see humans return to the moon for the first time in more than 50 years, we are backing exciting research like this."

Rolls-Royce plans to have a prototype ready by 2029.

Analysis

Dan Milmo



Suspicion of Chinese tech has haunted Britain's allies. Now Sunak is starting to feel it too

When asked this week whether the UK would ban TikTok on government phones, Rishi Sunak's response signalled a change in stance: "We look at what our allies are doing," he said.

Previously, ministers had seemed sanguine on the subject, even saying that whether or not the app stays on someone's phone should be a matter of "personal choice".

Not any more. The UK's allies are turning against TikTok, and once Sunak said he was watching their actions, a ban became inevitable. The US, Canada and the EU's executive arm have already decided to strip the app from government devices. It's now a matter of geopolitical choice.

TikTok is owned by Beijing-based ByteDance. The fear among its critics on both sides of the Atlantic is that the Chinese state can access data generated by its more than 1 billion users and manipulate its recommendation algorithm in order to push a China-friendly point of view to unsuspecting users.

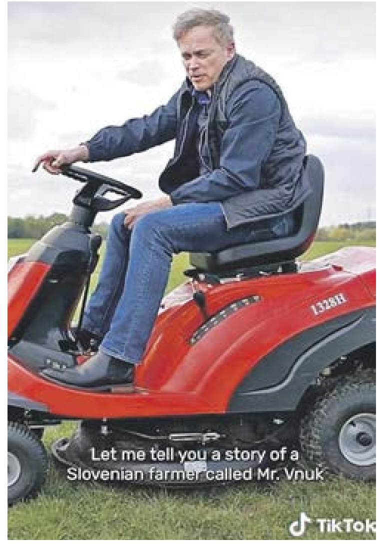
There is no hard evidence that this is the case, and TikTok says it would refuse any data request from the Chinese government. But tensions over Taiwan, concerns that China may supply weaponry to Russia, the shooting-down of a Chinese spy balloon over the US and warnings of state espionage have created a toxic backdrop to those denials. And on Monday a refreshed review of UK defence and foreign policy described China as an "epoch-defining" challenge.

TikTok's reputation was also severely damaged last year when ByteDance admitted employees had attempted to use the app to spy on reporters.

The company will be concerned that Sunak will now match every upward ratchet of pressure by Britain's allies. On Wednesday, the US demanded that TikTok's owner sell the app or face a complete ban. Will the UK ultimately threaten the same?

If geopolitics is the leading issue in these moves - as opposed to hard proof that TikTok poses a security threat - then it is likely every deterioration in relations between China and the west will push the app further along the road to a complete ban or divestment from its owners. Indeed, a forced sale in the US - if the Chinese government allows it to happen - could lead to TikTok being peeled away from ByteDance in its entirety.

The shooting down of the Chinese spy balloon last month was followed by reports that negotiations between TikTok and the Biden administration over a deal to resolve security concerns had stalled, while this week the White House gave its support to a Senate bill giving the president the power to ban TikTok.



▲ *An image from cabinet minister Grant Shapps' TikTok account*

> *It is likely that every deterioration in relations between Beijing and the west will push TikTok closer to a complete ban*

The company's attempts to assuage those concerns - for instance, by announcing plans to store US and European user data on third-party servers - seem to have failed with the current president in the same way they did with his predecessor, who also tried to force a divestment of TikTok's US arm.

The problem cited by TikTok's critics is the existence of Chinese laws that could force ByteDance to cooperate with Beijing authorities, including the National Intelligence Law of 2017, which states that all organisations and citizens shall "support, assist and cooperate" with China's intelligence efforts. For many, this is enough evidence.

Perhaps eliminating the concerns over state interference, by selling TikTok to non-Chinese investors, is the only way to quell the critics. But there are plenty of other aspects of the Chinese tech industry - such as Huawei phones and other electronic devices - that are just as capable of eliciting similar concerns.

Without strong supporting evidence, there is no way of knowing how proportionate the British government is being - and the same could be true for moves against other Chinese technology interests.



Representative Example	Duration of Device Plan	Upfront Cost	Monthly Device Payment	Credit Amount	Total amount payable for device	Interest rate (fixed)	Representative APR	Cash price (to buy outright)	Airtime Plan, today to Mar 2023	Airtime Plan, Apr 2023 to Mar 2024	Airtime Plan, Apr 2024 to Mar 2025
iPad 9th Gen 64GB	48 months	£20	£9.30	£446	£466	0%	0%	£466	£13	£13 + RPI announced in Feb 2023 = Price A	Price A + RPI announced in Feb 2024

***Each year your Airtime Plan will be increased by the Retail Price Index (RPI) rate of inflation announced in February plus 3.9%. If RPI is negative, we'll only apply the 3.9%. You'll see this increase on your April 2023 bill onwards. See o2.co.uk/prices.** £9.30 Device Plan for 48 months and £13 monthly rolling Airtime Plan. £20 upfront. Get 12 months' free airtime when you buy the iPad 9th Gen with a 48-month device plan. £9.30* for the first 12 months and £22.30* thereafter on a 1GB tariff. Data allowances must be used within the months and cannot be carried over. Subject to availability. Ends 22 March 2023. **48 Months O2 Refresh custom plans:** Direct purchases only. Pay the cash price for your device or spread the cost over 3 to 48. Like new devices available for 3 to 36 months. The device cost will be the same whatever you choose. There may be an upfront cost. You need a monthly rolling Airtime Plan as long as you have a Device Plan. Pay off your Device Plan at any time and you can choose to keep your Airtime Plan, upgrade or leave. If your Airtime Plan ends for any reason you will need to pay your Device Plan in full. If you are in the first 24 months of your Device Plan and you cancel your Airtime Plan you will have to pay the remainder of your Device Plan in full. After 24 months you can keep your Airtime Plan, upgrade it, or end it without affecting your Device Plan. Get up to 6 months' Apple TV+ when you buy an eligible iOS device on a Plus Plan from O2 ("Qualifying Purchase"). Redeem directly with Apple via redemption code provided to you within 7 days of Qualifying Purchase. All participants must redeem by 09 November 2023. Redemption terms apply. O2 provides a 3-month subscription (a "Subscription Period"), depending on which available device or offer is chosen, added to any existing or new trial period of up to 3 months provided by Apple directly. You must set up Apple account and agree to Apple's terms of use. You'll be automatically enrolled on to a paid monthly subscription directly with Apple at the end of the relevant Subscription Period. You cannot benefit from more than one subscription period with O2. Tariff eligibility criteria applies which includes being a UK resident and 18+. No cash or alternatives. Lost redemption codes will not be replaced. Offer may be withdrawn or amended at any time. Internet access required. **For how to claim and full terms:** o2.co.uk/termsandconditions/rewards. Get up to 6 months' Apple Music when you buy an eligible tariff direct from O2 ("Qualifying Purchase"). Redeem directly with Apple via redemption code provided to you within 7 days of Qualifying Purchase. All participants must redeem by 23 June 2023. Redemption terms apply. O2 provides a 5-month subscription ("Subscription Period") added to any existing or new trial period of up to 1 month provided by Apple directly. You must set up Apple account and agree to Apple's terms of use. You'll be automatically enrolled on to a paid monthly subscription directly with Apple at the end of the Subscription Period. You cannot benefit from more than one subscription period with O2. Tariff eligibility criteria applies which includes being a UK resident and 18+. No cash or alternatives. Lost redemption codes will not be replaced. Offer may be withdrawn or amended at any time. Internet access required. For how to claim and full terms: o2.co.uk/termsandconditions/rewards. UK Data Only. Devices subject to availability. 0% APR. Finance subject to status and credit checks. 18+. Direct Debit. Credit provided by Telefónica UK Ltd, SL1 4DX. Telefónica UK is authorised and regulated by the FCA for consumer credit and insurance. Terms apply, see o2.co.uk/terms



For many, TikTok is a place for fun videos, but the government sees the app in a more worrying light
PHOTOGRAPH: JESSICA PONS/NYT/REDUX/EYEVINE

MPs refer TikTok to regulator over handling of personal data

Dan Sabbagh
Dan Milmo

A cross-party group of MPs and peers has asked the information commissioner to investigate whether Chinese-owned TikTok's handling of personal information is in breach of UK law.

A letter from the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (Ipac) argues that TikTok cannot be compliant with data protection rules – and comes just hours after the UK announced a ban on the video-sharing app being installed on ministers' and officials' government-owned phones.

Ipac believes TikTok could ultimately be forced to stop its operations in the UK if it cannot find a way of complying, amid escalating western pressure on the company because of its Chinese ownership and the security of the data of its millions of users.

TikTok said it was a victim of "fundamental misconceptions" which earlier yesterday it complained were "driven by wider geopolitics" in which ordinary people played no part. It said it had begun work on a data security plan for users in Europe.

Earlier yesterday, Oliver Dowden, the Cabinet Office minister, said that, following a security review by UK intelligence officials, the app would be banned from ministers', advisers' and civil servants' government phones "with immediate effect".

Dowden said TikTok required users to give permission for the app to access data stored on the device, which is then collected and stored by the company – and can be accessed from China. Allowing such permissions gives TikTok access to a range of data, including contacts, user content and geolocation data. Dowden said this justified the ban because there was "a specific risk with government devices".

Britain has joined the US, the European Commission, Canada and Belgium in banning TikTok on government devices recently, amid a deterioration of relations with China.

But Beijing accused the UK of abusing the concept of national security. "The decision was made by the UK side based on its political motive rather than facts," an embassy spokesperson said, adding that it "undermines the confidence of the international community in the UK's business environment".

Dowden's announcement marks a sharp U-turn from the UK's previous position and also came a few hours after TikTok said its owner, ByteDance, had been told by the US government to sell the app or face a possible ban in the country.

At the heart of the complaint is TikTok's acknowledgment that user data can in some circumstances be accessed from China, and so is outside UK safeguards. "It is my understanding that TikTok cannot implement appropriate safeguards to protect personal data that is transferred outside of the UK and EEA region," wrote Lord Bethell, a Conservative peer who is another complainant.

Particular concern centres on a 2017 national security law in China that requires organisations and citizens to "support, assist and cooperate with state intelligence work". It has been cited in the past to justify complete bans on equipment made by Huawei, another Chinese company, in British and other 5G telecoms networks.

TikTok has told European users – and MPs in evidence given to parliament – that their data can be accessed by staff in China for limited reasons such as checking the performance of its algorithms. It said: "Lord Bethell has a good point that this is a grey area in law, where we have a potential for the cross-country data transfer laws in the UK to be contradicted by the National Intelligence Law in China, for instance."

A spokesperson for the Information Commissioner's Office said the letter had raised "serious concerns" that it would review. "Protecting people's rights is an important part of our work, and we work closely with organisations, including scrutinising the privacy practices of the big tech platforms," they added.

TikTok said it had begun work on "a comprehensive plan" to protect European user data, including storing UK user data in its European data centres and including independent supervision of its approach.

A TikTok spokesperson said: "TikTok's user data is stored in the US and Singapore, not China" and that the company was incorporated outside China. "We comply with strict data laws, such as GDPR, in the UK and EU, which also govern data transfers," they added.

Earlier in the day, responding to the UK government ban, TikTok also blamed "wider geopolitics, in which TikTok, and our millions of users in the UK, play no part".

US Biden raises stakes with threat of total ban on app

Sam Levin

The Biden administration has threatened to ban TikTok in the US unless the social media company's Chinese owners divest their stakes in it.

The move, first reported by the Wall Street Journal, is the most dramatic among several escalations by American officials and legislators, driven by fears that US user data held by the company could be passed on to China's government.

There are concerns about the potential for Chinese espionage, with countries including the UK, Canada and Australia moving to ban the app from government phones.

The US has already banned TikTok on federal government devices but this marks the first time under President Biden that a nationwide ban has been threatened. Any US ban would face legal hurdles, however.

A TikTok spokesperson, Brooke Oberwetter, told Reuters the firm had recently heard from the Treasury-led committee on foreign investment in the United States (CFIUS), which had demanded that the Chinese owners of the app sold their shares, saying they would otherwise face a possible US ban of the video app.

TikTok is one of the world's most popular social media networks with more than 100 million US users.

The Wall Street Journal said 60% of shares in ByteDance, which owns TikTok, were owned by global investors, 20% by employees and 20% by its founders. CFIUS had unanimously recommended in 2020 that ByteDance divest TikTok.

"If protecting national security is the objective, divestment doesn't solve the problem: a change in ownership would not impose any new restrictions on data flows or access," Oberwetter said in a statement.

The move comes as TikTok's chief executive, Shou Zi Chew, is expected to appear in Congress next week.

TikTok and CFIUS have been negotiating for more than two years on data security requirements. TikTok said it had spent more than $1.5bn on data security and rejects spying allegations.

China accused the US of spreading disinformation. Its foreign ministry spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, said the US had yet to present evidence that TikTok threatened its national security, but was using data security concerns as a cover suppress foreign firms: "The US should stop spreading disinformation about data security, stop suppressing the relevant company, and provide an open, fair and non-discriminatory environment for foreign businesses to invest and operate in the US."



Shou Zi Chew, head of TikTok, is due to appear before the US Congress

The US congressional committee has been prompted to move forward with legislation that would empower the US president to ban the app.

Amid the increasing scrutiny, TikTok this month announced a data security plan that it said would protect user information across Europe. That plan involves data storage on servers in Ireland and Norway, with a third-party IT company vetting any transfers of data beyond Europe.

Additional reporting **Reuters**

Footballers 50% likelier to get dementia than average – study

Anna Bawden

Footballers are 50% more likely to develop dementia than the rest of the population, a study has found, fuelling calls to restrict rules around heading the ball in football.

Researchers from the Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, published in the journal Lancet Public Health today, compared the health records of 6,000 elite footballers and more than 56,000 non-footballers between 1924 and 2019.

They found that among male footballers playing in the Swedish top division, 9% were diagnosed with neurodegenerative disease, compared with 6% of the control sample.

The study examined differences in cognitive health for outfield players and goalkeepers. Researchers found that outfield players had a 1.6 times greater risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia than the wider population sample. But goalkeepers, who rarely head the ball, had no increased risk of Alzheimer's or dementia, "supporting the hypothesis that mild head impacts sustained when heading the ball could explain the increased risk in outfield players," the study concluded.



▲ *Campaigners want a ban on heading in junior football* PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

9%
Proportion of Swedish footballers who developed brain disease, as against 6% of the control sample

Peter Ueda, an assistant professor at the Karolinska Institutet and a co-author of the study, said: "Importantly, our findings suggest that goalkeepers don't have the same increased risk of neurodegenerative disease as outfield players. Goalkeepers rarely head the ball, unlike outfield players, but are exposed to similar environments and lifestyles during their football careers and perhaps also after retirement."

In contrast, the authors found no significant risk increase for football players of contracting motor neurone disease, while the risk of Parkinson's disease and overall mortality was lower among football players compared with the control group.

The findings follow Scottish research in 2019 that concluded former professional footballers were 3.5 times more likely to develop dementia and other serious neurological diseases. And a study published last year found professional footballers were more likely to have worse brain health after age 65 than non-footballers.

David Curtis, an honorary professor at University College London Genetics Institute, said: "It seems extremely plausible that repeatedly heading the ball during training and normal play produces brain damage which over time can result in dementia. The fact that the risk to goalkeepers, who rarely head the ball, is not increased, strengthens this hypothesis. If we assume that about one in 10 people would develop dementia anyway, then this means that about one in 20 professional footballers will develop dementia who would not otherwise have done so, as a result of heading the ball."

In England, the Football Association is trialling banning children under 12 from heading the ball in certain grassroots competitions.

But campaigners have called for a complete ban on children heading the ball. Luke Griggs, the chief executive of the brain injury charity Headway, said: "It is important that football is willing to evolve as our understanding of the long-term implications of repeated sub-concussive impacts increases.

"We know enough now to make balanced, sensible adjustments to limit exposure to head impacts," he said. This includes "limiting of heading practice drills for adults, and complete bans on children heading the ball as they move through key stages in their physical and neurological development," he added.

Dr Adam White, the head of brain health at the Professional Footballers' Association, called for the UK's independent Industrial Injuries Advisory Council, which reports to the Department for Work and Pensions, "to recognise dementia as an industrial disease".



That's some bone: dog's plesiosaur find goes on display in Dorset

Steven Morris



▼ *The bones of the 200m-year-old marine reptile being reassembled in Charmouth* PHOTOGRAPH: BNPS

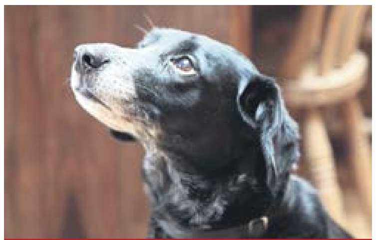
At first, when Raffle the dog began scratching at something on the beach at Lyme Regis, Tracey Barclay thought he had probably found a boring old stick or stone.

But when she looked closer, Barclay realised Raffle had happened on something much more interesting – the remains of a plesiosaur, a marine reptile that swam off modern-day Dorset 200m years ago.

After 16 years of painstaking work extracting, cleaning and piecing together the 750 fossilised bones eventually found on the spot, the plesiosaur – nicknamed Raffle in honour of the finder – has gone on display at Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre.

"It's brilliant to see him there in all his glory," said Barclay, 59. Raffle is one of only a few lower Jurassic specimens in the world preserved and mounted in 3D, as usually the bones are found pressed flat. Barclay said: "The 3D makes it much more vivid. It almost brings him to life."

She had been walking along the famed "ammonite pavement" at Monmouth Beach, Lyme Regis, in 2007 with her partner, Chris Moore, who runs a fossil shop and preparation business, and a group of friends.



'He suddenly got up and started scratching away'

Tracey Barclay
Raffle's owner

"It's a fabulous place to walk but Chris and his friends had walked on. I sat down with Raffle. He suddenly got up and started scratching away."

She realised what Raffle, a rescue dog with bits of pointer and labrador in him, had found was a vertebra.

"I moved some rocks to see if there were any other bones and spotted a paddle bone – which suggested it could be a plesiosaur," she said.

"Chris was miles away and the tide was coming in. I thought: 'Oh gosh. It can't really be a plesiosaur, can it?' I've only ever found pyrite ammonites – the sort of thing kids find all the time – before. Chris came back and confirmed what it was."

A lengthy process began of keeping an eye on the find and getting the correct permissions to extract it.

The bones were taken to Moore's workshop, then sent away to be cleaned before being mounted and finally put into place at the heritage centre. Barclay said: "There was a bit of trepidation as it went up."

About 70% of the fossilised skeleton, which is 3.2 metres long, has been found with missing bones cast and modelled from the other bones.

The remains of plesiosaurs have long been found in Dorset. Mary Anning, the pioneering palaeontologist and fossil collector, found the complete skeleton of a plesiosaur in 1823. But the 3D aspect of Raffle makes it all the more special.

Revenge porn trial was difficult, says reality star

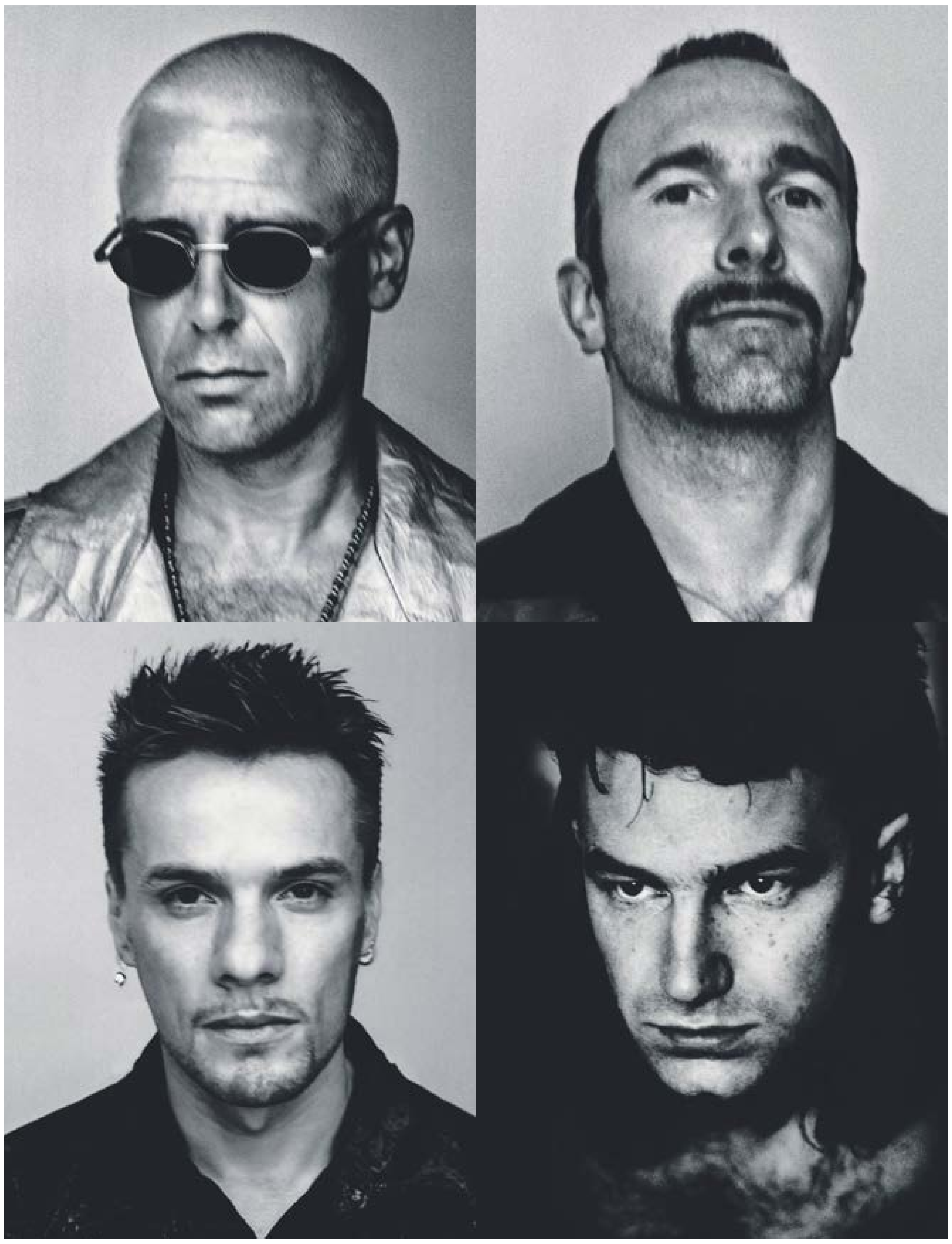
Tobi Thomas

The reality TV personality Georgia Harrison, who was made a victim of revenge porn by her ex-boyfriend, has said she did not realise how difficult it would be to convict him.

Speaking on ITV's This Morning programme to promote her upcoming documentary, Harrison said she had felt relieved when Stephen Bear was jailed for 21 months after posting a private video of them having sex.

Harrison told the presenter Holly Willoughby: "It wasn't until recently I realised just how hard it is to get a conviction for this sort of a crime. It shouldn't be, as it is such a painful crime. Although it was really painful to go through what I did, I feel it's making some sort of change to society, and I am just relieved."

She added that the ordeal had felt as if she was experiencing the stages of grief, and that the nature of the crime meant she never had full anonymity. At one point, she said, "I was worried the postman knew about it."


U2
SONGS OF SURRENDER
THE ~~NEW~~ RE-IMAGINED ALBUM
OUT NOW
ISLAND

News
Iraq war: 20 years on

‘It never goes away’

A mother, a soldier, a nurse: three lives changed by war

Kevin Rawlinson

The Iraq war left a profound mark: it brought about the overthrow of a dictator followed by years of chaos. In Britain, meanwhile, it acted as the catalyst for one of the most popular domestic anti-war movements the country has seen and left an indelible imprint on its history too.

The conflict also left many in the UK asking: could they ever really trust their political leaders at a time of national crisis again? And could it ever be right to send young men and women to war without having first exhausted all peaceful means - and without a clear idea of what they were even meant to achieve once they got there?

Twenty years on from the Iraq invasion, some of those who were involved have been reflecting on how it changed their lives.

“It never goes away. It’s there from the minute you shut your eyes to the minute you wake up.”

Rose Gentle is talking about the death of her 19-year-old son, Fusilier Gordon Gentle, who served in Iraq with 1st Battalion, Royal Highland Fusiliers. But her words could be those of any one of the millions of people directly touched by the conflict.

The course of Gentle’s life was changed irreversibly when she learned her son had been killed by a roadside bomb in Basra on 28 June 2004. He was out on a patrol that was later found to have been underequipped for the job.

She went from leading a quiet family life to running a high-profile campaign for justice for her son and others.

“The more I heard about Iraq, [the more] I thought there’s something not right. And that’s what triggered me off to start the campaign to find out why we went into Iraq,” she said in an interview marking Monday’s 20th anniversary of the invasion.

Gentle is a founder member of Military Families Against the War, which campaigned for the Chilcot inquiry, as well as for better equipment for those who were still serving there.

Her campaigning led her to stand as an independent in the 2005 general election against Adam Ingram - then the armed forces minister - in the East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow constituency. She also tried to sue Tony Blair, the prime minister who



▲ *Tony Blair’s decision to go to war triggered two decades of controversy*

sent her son to war. She said she felt she needed to stand to give voice to the families of the bereaved. Political leaders “don’t want to hear the true stories of how the families have been fighting and how they’ve suffered. So I thought: ‘Well, if it’s the only way we can do this, we’ll do it.’ People in East Kilbride were absolutely fantastic. They were. A lot of people were so supportive.”

Gentle reflected on the campaigning life Iraq led her to live. “If he was still here and hadn’t been in the army, yeah probably my life would have been different. It probably would have been. This was just something I felt I had to do for my son … I probably would’ve had a quiet life.”

Her son was one of 179 British armed forces personnel or MoD civilians killed in Iraq, while more than 3,000 were wounded.

Craig Mealing, a senior non-commissioned officer, served two tours in Iraq as a combat engineer. “I’ve been quite lucky - no one in my section’s been injured. We’ve just had close calls. And other people have, obviously, not been as lucky. Walking away with it, you get a bit of guilt as well: that other people have suffered.”

Years later, and having retired in 2013, he found himself struggling with his mental health. “When I left the army, I started to get into trouble, basically. My relationship broke down … And then, I went to Combat Stress [a veterans’ charity] in 2015 and I started the programme there.”

The key to working out a coping mechanism for his own post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), he said, was the discovery of a potter’s wheel at Combat Stress.

He said he was intrigued by the TV programme The Great Pottery Throw Down: “It’s something I’ve watched in the background and I thought I’d have a go … and I just found [pottery] quite relaxing. For me, it’s a sense of achievement, I find it a bit rewarding and you get something out of it … It’s a way of having a sense of purpose. It’s my way of grounding myself as well.”

Specific experiences took Mealing back to his time in Iraq. “The heat was just horrendous. It was just so hot. I work in the port London Gateway; there’s an oil refinery there. If I smell on a hot day, the oil, it brings me back into that position again.

“All I can remember associating to Iraq is stepping off the plane and smelling the oil because it was just constantly burning everywhere - in the distance, the oilfields - and that’s all you could smell was thick oil. And that still affects me now. If I smell that it brings me back into that place.”

Part of the experience in Iraq, Mealing explained, was a cocktail of emotions. It may not be as readily acknowledged in public, but one of those is excitement.

“I’ve been in situations where it is exciting,” said Mealing. “But, when you reflect on it, you go: ‘Oh my effing God, that was close.’ At the time, you don’t think like that, you go into autopilot. It is exciting. It’s the time afterwards, when you have time to reflect, you start to go: ‘Shit that is quite close.’”

Mark, whose surname has been withheld to protect his identity, served two tours as a psychiatric nurse, helping individual personnel process their emotions and advising commanders on how to look after their charges’ mental health.

“There was that sense of excitement, it’s a sense of doing what it’s all about, I guess,” he said of being deployed to join the initial invasion force in 2003.

“You think of my day-to-day job in Germany: a lot of routine; rocking up at the office, having a clinic. Life gets a little bit samey sometimes. Whereas, when you deploy, there’s a lot of unknown elements to it … You don’t quite know the conditions … There were risks there.

“The excitement is the sense of a bit of adventure, a bit of an unknown quantity. It’s away from the normal routine of things.”

But Mark echoed some of Mealing’s thoughts about reflecting later on what exactly happened. Even though he was an experienced member of the armed forces by 2003, having served in several theatres before deployment to Iraq, he admitted he had been somewhat foolhardy as he pushed



▲ *Rose Gentle has campaigned for justice for her son, Fusilier Gordon Gentle, killed by a roadside bomb in Basra in 2004*
PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD/ THE GUARDIAN

▼ *British soldiers with a mother and baby as they made efforts to connect with local people early in the war*
PHOTOGRAPH: DAN CHUNG/ THE GUARDIAN

‘If Gordon was still here and hadn’t been in the army, probably my life would be different’

Rose Gentle
Mother and campaigner





across the border. He said his second tour was marked more by fear of a people who no longer wanted the British army in Iraq and of insurgents who would put their positions under indirect fire - rounds often falling close to where he was holding his clinic.

Mark left the army, but his job means he helps fellow veterans look after their mental health. "In my contact with the people I come across within Combat Stress, I can use my experiences to empathise with the guys and girls who have experienced and who have suffered. And I can bring that to the table - I've had that shared experience with them. I was there. I know what they're talking about."

Referring to his comrades, he said he would expect to see the normal range of mental health issues, albeit the army's vetting and training processes usually mean lower levels of symptoms such as psychosis. PTSD is, of course, one.

But did Iraq change him personally? "This is the kind of stuff when I would have done briefings, I would talk about; how our experiences change us. Not only when servicemen and women deploy - they change because of their experience - but [also] the people we leave behind - wives, families - they change because of what they're going through. We all change.

"Yes, I'm sure I've changed. I'd like to think I've changed for the better, in the sense of I'm a bit more worldly experienced. I've seen the world at large and I've witnessed these conflicts that have happened around the world. And then, obviously, in Iraq."

There is one reflection on the conflict that united Gentle, Mealing and Mark: pride.

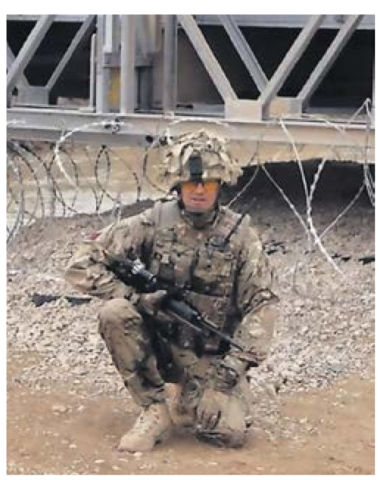
In 2017, Gentle was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Glasgow for her campaigning. At the time, she declared herself delighted. So, did it make her proud to have honoured her son?

"I'm not the one who's done proud. It's Gordon who's done proud. Gordon's done us proud," she said.

For Mealing, it was the feeling that he did the job it was his duty to do. "I'm quite proud of what I've achieved because not many people have done what I've done. And people take the piss out of me at work. They go: 'Oh, Uncle Albert over there, with his war stories.'

"But I'm quite proud of what I achieved. Iraq, whether I agreed or disagreed with it, I look back now and think to myself: 'Us, as a British army, we did the best we could have done.'"

Iraq left its stamp on the history of the UK like few other conflicts have. As Mark put it: "I'm glad I was there, part of history."



▲ *Craig Mealing says he feels a sense of pride in having done his duty*

'A crisis of faith' In the US, the damage done to trust in government deepens

Julian Borger
Washington

Twenty years ago, Lt Col Karen Kwiatkowski was working at the Pentagon, when she became aware of the Office of Special Plans. The OSP had been set up to produce the kind of intelligence that George W Bush's administration wanted to hear, about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Kwiatkowski, then 42, saw first-hand how the disastrous war was confected.

"I had this huge faith in my superiors, but I came to find out there are very incompetent people in very high positions," she said.

Kwiatkowski, who became a Pentagon whistleblower over the war, is now a farmer, part-time college professor, and occasional political candidate on the libertarian end of the Republican party in Virginia.

"There's a crisis of faith in this country," Kwiatkowski said. "As always, when you have these crises of faith you see populist leaders, and the emergence of Trump certainly was a response to a crisis in faith. It'll be interesting to see what happens next, because Americans have a lot less to be proud of than we think."

On the whole, she believes the experience of the Iraq war has imbued Americans with a healthy scepticism about what they are being told by the establishment - but not nearly enough.

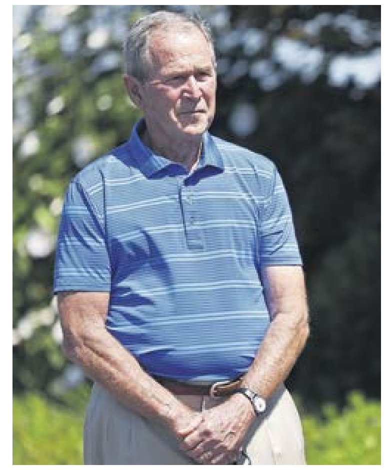
"I could go into the Walmart right now and ask everybody about WMD in Iraq and probably three out 10 people, maybe more, will swear that it's all true," she said. "Our public propaganda in this country is supremely good."

Polling figures over the past two decades suggest that overall attitudes towards foreign policy are fairly stable. When the Chicago Council on Global Affairs asked Americans whether "it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs or if we stay out of world affairs", 71% supported activism in 2002 and 64% still supported it in 2021.

The Iraq invasion coincided with a collapse in public trust in government. Data from surveys by the Pew Research Centre, shows the post-Iraq malaise is enduring.

"It said first and foremost to young people that the government can't be trusted," John Zogby, a US pollster, said. "It also said that the American military may be the strongest in the world but it has serious limits, and it can't impose its will, even on smaller countries."

There are still US soldiers on counterterrorist missions in Iraq and Syria. The Authorisation for Use of Military Force that Congress first granted to George W Bush's administration in the run-up to the 2003 invasion has yet to be repealed.



▲ *George W Bush's leap into war led to a schism in the Republican party*

Coleen Rowley, an FBI whistleblower who exposed security lapses leading to the 9/11 attacks, wrote an open letter to the FBI director in March 2003, warning of a "flood of terrorism" resulting from the Iraq invasion. She says now that two decades on, nobody has been held accountable for the fatal mistakes.

"I think the real danger is that their propaganda was very successful, and people like Bush and Dick Cheney have now been rehabilitated," Rowley said.

The war also opened a schism in the Republican party, strengthening an anti-intervention faction that eventually triumphed with the 2016 election of Donald Trump.

Bush and his former vice-president have drawn some positive liberal press for their opposition, albeit low key, to some of the excesses of the Trump era, but Kenneth Pollack, a Middle East and military expert at the American Enterprise Institute, said that they paid a political price by becoming marginalised in their own party.

"The system has punished those people. If you were a Bushie, if you were a neocon, you're no longer welcome to the party," Pollack said.

Pollack is a former CIA analyst and a Democrat who backed the invasion, believing the evidence on Saddam Hussein's WMD and supporting the humanitarian argument for ousting a dictator.

He jokes that he is the only person to have since apologised. It is not entirely true. But there have been no public expressions of remorse from former senior officials who took the fateful decisions.

It is one of the important ways in which the US has still not had a proper reckoning for the war.

Ukrainian refugees face struggle to find homes after leaving their hosts

Amelia Gentleman

More than half of Ukrainian refugees struggle to find affordable rental accommodation after moving on from living with their host families, according to research published a year on from the launch of the homes-for-Ukraine scheme.

In the past year more than 117,000 Ukrainians have arrived in the UK under the hosting scheme. A further 49,000 have arrived to join relatives already living here.

But practical problems face those who need to move on from the accommodation offered by UK sponsors and find themselves unable to rent or secure social housing.

A survey of 325 Ukrainian refugees carried out by Generation Rent and the charity Opora, which supports Ukrainians in the UK, found that 49% had been unable to provide a guarantor when looking for somewhere to rent and 43% had been unable to find money for a tenancy deposit.

British host families were asked to make an initial six-month commitment to accommodate refugees from Ukraine, and many have been unable to extend that invitation into a more permanent arrangement as the war has continued.

A total of 4,630 Ukrainian refugee households have been classified as homeless after a relationship with their host family came to an end.

The latest data shows a 44% increase in the last month in the number of Ukrainians presenting as homeless, according to the Local Government Association.

A number of anniversary events this week have celebrated the achievements of the scheme, which was rolled out just 18 days after the start of the war. Under the scheme 71% of Ukrainian refugees in the UK are being hosted by people who were strangers beforehand, according to the Sanctuary Foundation, one of the main matching organisations helping hosts to find refugees.



▼ *Anna Didenko, her husband and their two children share a house with seven other families* PHOTOGRAPH: GRAEME ROBERTSON/THE GUARDIAN

Krish Kandiah, the Sanctuary Foundation's founder, describes the scheme as an overwhelming success, adding that it was "the largest UK response to a refugee crisis since the historic Kindertransport of 1939".

He hopes the programme will become a template for wider refugee sponsorship programmes, arguing that it has saved £4.4bn of taxpayers' money because the government has not had to pay for hotel accommodation.

But other organisations have called on the government to focus on the difficulties facing those who need to find independent housing.

Stan Beneš, managing director of Opora, said: "This research makes it clear that Ukrainian refugees are currently facing a disproportionately high level of structural barriers in accessing the private rented sector.

"People are having to settle for properties that are clearly not suitable for sustainable rebuilding of lives, as reflected in the percentage reporting damp and mould, and unaddressed disrepair."

Anastasia Salnikova, who runs the J&C Soul group for Ukrainian refugees, which supports families living in unsuitable temporary accommodation, said: "Often the council tells them they need to find and rent their own flats, knowing that they can't do it. They feel abandoned."

She is supporting Anna Didenko, her husband, Dmytro, and their two children, Yaroslav, 10 and Bohdan, one, who have been sleeping on bunk beds in a small room in a shared house in Hounslow since last July, when their original sponsor found himself unable to continue hosting them. They were told by the council the placement would be for two or three weeks, but they have been there for almost eight months, sharing a kitchen with seven other households.

"We're happy to be here, away from the danger, but we feel neglected and ignored," said Didenko, an accountant from Kyiv.

A government spokesperson said: "In the year since we launched homes for Ukraine we have welcomed 117,100 people to safety thanks to the generosity of British families across the country. All guests can work and access benefits, and local authorities have a legal duty to ensure no families are left without housing.

"We are giving councils funding for each … guest and have recently also extended and increased 'thank you' payments for sponsors. Just yesterday we announced £1m to help Ukrainians improve their English and unlock employment opportunities."



'You can breathe' Opera secrets speed recovery of long Covid sufferers

Steven Morris

The mezzo-soprano Kate Woolveridge has performed on grand stages in front of thousands of people but at the moment is the star of much more intimate sessions, helping groups of long Covid sufferers by passing on secrets from the world of opera.

Woolveridge is one of a team of singers and teachers being beamed into participants' living rooms and kitchens via Zoom for a Welsh National Opera (WNO) project designed to give them techniques and strategies used by performers to support breath control, lung function, circulation and posture.

More than 100 people have already taken part in the Wellness with WNO scheme and such is its success that it is being expanded across Wales. The Guardian joined a session this week when Woolveridge worked with six women. There was joy, a lot of smiles and a few tears as she encouraged them to find their "inner opera singer", a proud and powerful figure.

Woolveridge first asked the six to plant their feet on the ground, picture the energy beneath the earth's surface and try to connect to it, enjoying the feeling of "groundedness". She invited them to stretch and notice the strength in their bodies before leading breathing exercises (or games, as she preferred to call them).

Another was asked to suggest a scent - she went for rose - and the group were asked to take in, then breathe out the imaginary fragrance.

She asked them to check how much air they had left - and most still had some breath, which they found comforting.



▲ *The Welsh National Opera perform at the Millennium Centre, Cardiff* PHOTOGRAPH: ELLIOTT FRANKS

▼ *Donna Jenkins, who lost her voice, said the sessions offered practical advice as well as community*



The group listened to a recording of the Welsh National Opera performing the Humming Chorus from Madame Butterfly. "You can breathe, hum along or just be," Woolveridge told them.

Finally came the singing. Only Woolveridge was unmuted. She played the piano and sang along - rounds of "doobie doobie doo" and to conclude, a song called Woyaya that ends: "But we'll get there / Heaven knows how we will get there / But we know we will."

One of the women, Dee, was close to tears as she explained how the sessions had helped. "This is the first really positive thing I have done for the last two years," she said. "But I feel I'm towards the end of that horrendous, rough, muddy road. It's been amazing."

Carolyn, who has trouble talking, said: "I haven't spoken for 14 months with my own voice. For many months I had no sound at all. Now it comes and goes and I've been left with a permanent cough.

"I get more sound when I sing than when I speak. That's positive that I hear something coming back. It has also helped me control my breath better. These techniques help you to come out the other side a bit quicker."

After the session, Rachel Wallbank, of the long Covid rehab team at the Cardiff and Vale university health board, said Wales had a long tradition of using music as therapy. "The male voice choirs in south Wales were about social interaction and improving lung health," she said.

Donna Jenkins, 48, a mother-of-three from mid Wales, who took part in the session, said she had had the "beast" of Covid three times.

"I lost my voice and developed a stammer and had to have speech and language therapy for eight months." She said the sessions provided both practical advice and a community.



*Reward Cards on selected 18mth Full Fibre plans issued by Giftcloud. Selected retailers. Valid for 150 days. Full Fibre 150: £50, Full Fibre 500: £75, Full Fibre 900: £100. CPI+3.7% annual increase from April 2024. £32 for Full Fibre 150. Up to 944Mb/s on Full Fibre 900 only. Ends 12 April. Subject to local availability. Terms apply.

LESS MALARKEY MORE
SMARTY
SEARCH SMARTY MOBILE

NO ANNUAL PRICE RISES. NO CONTRACT.

We'll target Labour voters in Tory swing seats, says Ed Davey

Peter Walker
Pippa Crerar

The Liberal Democrats will directly court Labour voters in blue wall swing seats to try to build a critical mass of tactical voting in the run-up to the next election, Ed Davey has said before the party's first in-person conference since 2019.

The planned campaign of letters in Conservative-held commuter belt constituencies where the Lib Dems are the main challengers was intended to not just persuade Labour supporters to lend their vote as a means to change the government but because "they feel an affinity with us", Davey said.

Speaking before the spring conference, beginning today, where he will make his first in-person leaders' speech to a party he has led for over three years, Davey was at pains to not attack Labour, stressing that almost all seats the Lib Dems hope to win are Conservative-held.

The Lib Dems have ruled out any pre-election pacts, and Davey stressed that he and Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, have never discussed deals.

While the Lib Dems' trio of byelection successes in the past two years have been based on appealing to disaffected Conservative voters, they have also required supporters of other parties to join an informal anti-Tory voting bloc.

The new direct approach to Labour voters is an attempt to both focus minds before an election expected next year, and stress the liberal and internationalist credentials of a party some still associate with the 2010-15 Lib Dem-Tory coalition.

The letters, from Davey, will set



'We're doing extraordinarily well. I am not having a go at Labour, but I just don't think that they have sealed the deal'

out the Lib Dems' pledge to immediately restore overseas aid to 0.7% of GDP, saying it was vital the UK properly supported people in places such as Syria and Afghanistan.

"We want to make sure that in seats like these, people who would otherwise vote Labour aren't voting for us just because we're the only ones who can beat the Conservatives," he said.

"I'd like them to do it because they actually quite like us, and they

◀ *Ed Davey will make his first in-person leader's conference speech after three years in charge* PHOTOGRAPH: GRAEME ROBERTSON/THE GUARDIAN

feel an affinity with us. And I think they should with some of the positions we've been taking. This isn't being competitive against Labour in these seats, and I'm not trying to say you're wrong to be Labour-inclined. My push is: look at the Liberal Democrats. We share a lot in common."

The party's gathering in York will be a chance for MPs and activists to hone tactics which have led them to overturn significant Conservative majorities in Chesham and Amersham, North Shropshire, and Tiverton and Honiton. But it will also mean a focus on indifferent national polling, with the party marooned for months on about 9% support.

Davey, whose autumn conference was cancelled last year because it would have coincided with the Queen's funeral, insisted he believes the party is doing far better than the polls suggest. "In actual elections, I think we're doing extraordinarily well," he said , also stressing gains in target areas at local elections.

"I think the polls are quite a signal of anti-Conservative thinking. I'm not having a go at Labour, but I just don't think that they have sealed the deal with people. What that means is that where we are the clear anti-Conservative party, it is quite easy to persuade Labour voters to vote for us, because they're really voting against the Conservatives."

A key test will come in May's local elections, where Davey is hopeful of making gains.

Cheltenham stabbing suspect appears in court

Kevin Rawlinson and agency

A man accused of stabbing a woman who works for the intelligence agency GCHQ has appeared in court.

Joshua Bowles, 29, was charged with attempted murder following an investigation by counter-terrorism detectives after the incident last Thursday outside a leisure centre about three miles from the GCHQ base in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire.

The woman, who is referred to in charges by the code number 99230, was repeatedly stabbed and remains in hospital in a stable condition.

Bowles was arrested at the scene and appeared at Westminster magistrates court yesterday. He is also charged with assaulting Alex Fuentes, causing him actual bodily harm, on the same date. District judge Nina Tempia remanded Bowles in custody before his next appearance, at the Old Bailey on 31 March.

Det Ch Supt Olly Wright, head of Counter-Terrorism Policing South East, said: "We would encourage people not to speculate on the specific circumstances surrounding this incident. We believe this was an isolated incident and there is no information to suggest any wider threat to the local community. We must now let the judicial process take place."

Stage review

Bawdy rural comedy asks serious questions

Village Idiot
Nottingham Playhouse
★★★★☆

Mark Fisher

Is it too soon to joke about the Queen? I couldn't possibly comment, but those of a sensitive disposition should take a look at the warning for audiences on the theatre's website. It runs 20 words longer than the show description.

The monarchy is the least of it - although there is a tarantula called Camilla and a gasp-inducing Diana gag. There are also off-colour remarks about disability, sexuality and race. And let's not forget the swearing.

The irony is that Samson Hawkins's debut play is a big, happy mainstream comedy. If anyone does take offence at its equal-opportunities upturning of intolerance and liberalism, they will be badly missing the point.

That point lies somewhere between Jez Butterworth's Jerusalem and Daisy May Cooper's This Country. The play is set in the Northamptonshire village of Syresham where, as the playwright imagines it, compulsory purchase orders threaten to tear apart a 1,000-year-old settlement to make way for HS2.

Like Butterworth's play, Village Idiot asks serious questions about identity, nostalgia and modernity. Like Cooper's sitcom, it has a very funny love-hate relationship with rural life.

What Hawkins captures with slippery brilliance is the community's contradictory combination of discrimination in theory and acceptance in practice. Everybody is at risk of being picked on. Debbie (Faye Wiggan) has learning disabilities, Barbara (Eileen Nicholas) depends on medication, Harry (Maximilian Fairley) is neurodivergent, Peter (Philip Labey) has a secret life as a Cher impersonator and Liam (Joseph Langdon) is from a family of Travellers. Even the patriarchal Kevin (Mark Benton) seems uncertain about the gender of his future wife.

If this sounds schematic, Hawkins never lets it seem so in a script that is witty, romantic and politically fresh. You relish the company of these characters. When the laughter subsides and the bulldozers move in, you are left wondering who the village idiot really is.

Until 25 March, then touring



▲ *Samson Hawkins's debut tackles identity, nostalgia and modernity*
PHOTOGRAPH: MARC BRENNER



▼ *Eileen Nicholas plays Barbara, who depends on medication*

Journalist quits BBC to promote slave reparations

Aamna Mohdin

A BBC journalist whose family made history by publicly apologising for its ownership of more than 1,000 enslaved Africans and paying reparation has quit the broadcaster to campaign for reparative justice full time.

Laura Trevelyan and her family travelled to Grenada last month to apologise for their ancestors' role in slavery and announced £100,000 in reparations.

Trevelyan said she would be quitting the BBC to become a full-time "roving advocate" on the campaign to secure reparations for the Caribbean from former colonial powers.

In 1835, the Trevelyan family received £26,898, a significant sum at the time, in compensation from the British government for the abolition of slavery a year earlier. The enslaved men, women and children on their plantations received nothing, and were forced to work a further eight years unpaid as "apprentices".



SIM only flexible 1 month plan. Limited time offer, 60GB (was 30GB). Terms at smarty.co.uk

Eyewitness





Inside the mega prison
Two thousand alleged gang members, handcuffed and wearing only shorts, are moved to a newly built mega prison, or "terrorist confinement centre", in Tecoluca, El Salvador. President Nayib Bukele's crackdown on gangs has led to the arrest of more than 62,000 suspects in the past year. Human rights groups say there have been abuses and violations of due process. A first group of detainees had been moved to the new prison last month. The justice minister has vowed the gang members will "never return to the streets".

PHOTOGRAPH: PRESIDENCIA EL SALVADOR/GETTY

LOVESTRUCK

What it is to be loved.
It's easy to forget
Life wasn't always like this
I closed my eyes, went back to the club where we met.
Whatever did he see in me?
This wild mess
My hippychick hair
down to my knees
My ripped jeans
I was in a daze as he pulled
over a chair.
He threw me
that devastating smile.
Then a flash of
those deep green eyes, locked on mine.
As some bygone pop filled the room
'Never gonna let you go!'
He leant into my ear
Shouting, to make his intentions heard
And in that moment, he had me.

(now read from bottom to top)

Refuge

If your partner turns on you **turn to us.** Donate now at refuge.org.uk

▼ *Plymouth city centre after the council destroyed 110 trees. Below, the Fortingall Yew in Perthshire*
MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: MARK PASSMORE/APEX NEWS



Mature trees need same protection as heritage buildings, urge campaigners after Plymouth loss



PHOTOGRAPH: JEAN WILLIAMSON/ALAMY

Sandra Laville
Environment correspondent

Mature trees should have the same protections as heritage buildings to stop destruction on the scale carried out in Plymouth this week, conservation campaigners say.

The Woodland Trust is calling for an English Heritage-style body to enforce greater protections for trees - including those which have value to the attractiveness of a town or city. Unlike for heritage buildings, the protections for trees are weak, said Andy Egan, the head of conservation policy at the charity.

"We have more protections for buildings than trees," said Egan. "Our oldest tree, the Fortingall Yew in Scotland, is around 3,000-5,000 years old - it is the oldest living entity in Europe, but it does not have the same level of protection as St Paul's Cathedral. No one would think it was acceptable to pull down St Paul's to build another Shard but trees are not protected in the same way." Anger grew yesterday over the night-time felling of more than 100 trees by Conservative-run Plymouth city council.

The tree removal was carried out despite significant local opposition, and lobbying of the council by the Woodland Trust. More than 16,000 people had signed a petition calling for the trees to be saved and incorporated into the new design for a walkway leading from the sea to the city centre. A council survey carried out as part of community engagement revealed that 68% of respondents did not support the plan; just 16% were in favour.

Protections for trees are limited in England and Wales. Tree protection orders can be overridden by planning permission. Egan said councils were responsible for issuing them, despite often leading the developments that threatened the trees.

Italy has passed a law giving 20,000 trees legal protection as natural monuments and the Woodland Trust is examining whether similar legislation could be pursued in the UK.

"We are exploring how we can go about providing protections for trees which are similar to heritage buildings," said Egan. "We want to raise public awareness that will help push forward stronger legislation and are investigating the best options."

In Plymouth the council felled the trees on Tuesday night, hours after a period of community engagement ended. Within a few hours, about 110 were destroyed as security guards patrolled the area. The move came days after a critical report on tree felling by Sheffield city council which found it had behaved dishonestly.

Plymouth city council argues its £12.7m scheme will "revamp the main artery through the city centre and turn it into an urban park", with 169 trees planted along the route.

But Egan said: "These trees in Plymouth were 40 or 50 years old, that's a whole generation. The older a tree is the more wildlife it supports, the more carbon it sequesters, and the better the canopy is.

"Mature trees are not replaceable with a sapling. There seems to be no appreciation that the starting point for regeneration or redevelopment should be designing around the nature that is already there."

Luke Pollard, Labour MP for Plymouth Sutton and Devonport, said: "There is so much anger here today. We are never going to get the trees back and it will take decades for replacement trees to be anywhere near the size of those taken down. We have got to look at what lessons we can learn from this. How do we ensure councils - especially those that have declared a climate emergency like Plymouth - how do we make that real and not just a press release?"

Straw, the local campaign set up to save the trees, succeeded in getting an injunction at 1am on Wednesday to stop the felling. It prevented about 15 trees from being taken down.

The Plymouth development is part financed by £2.7m from the Department for Transport's Transforming Cities Fund to promote walking and cycling.

The Guardian contacted the department for comment.

Barclay 'has broken promise to keep records of attacks on NHS staff'

Denis Campbell
Health policy editor

NHS staff have accused Steve Barclay of breaking a pledge to publish details of how many of them are abused and assaulted in the course of their work.

In 2018, when Barclay was a minister in the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), he promised he would resume publication of such statistics. However, five years later, he has not done so, despite being in his second stint as health secretary.

Labour claimed ministers were "burying their heads in the sand" on the subject of aggression against frontline staff, which has become more common since the pandemic.

In March 2018, Barclay told the Liberal Democrat former health minister Norman Lamb that "the [DHSC] is working with the NHS on a new data collection for violence against and abuse of NHS staff, which should be introduced from 2019". A body called NHS Protect had published data on attacks on staff in England for years, but it was scrapped in 2017.

Barclay restated his commitment to "a new data collection" in a further written answer in September 2018. However, the health minister Will Quince recently confirmed to the shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, that the plan had been dropped.

"What kind of protection is that for the heroes of the pandemic?" said Streeting. "Instead of burying their heads in the sand, ministers should do the bare minimum and count the instances of violence and abuse against NHS staff."

NHS Protect's last figures showed the number of assaults had risen by almost a quarter, from 56,718 in 2009-10 to 70,555 in 2015-16.

Laurence Turner, the head of policy at the GMB union, said: "This broken promise is bitterly disappointing."

Barclay declined a request to explain his failure to fulfil his promise. The DHSC said: "We've doubled the maximum sentence for those who are convicted of assaulting emergency workers … We are working closely with NHS England as they take action to prevent and reduce violence against staff, including through body-worn camera trials and a national violence prevention hub."

56,718

Number of assaults against NHS staff in 2009-10, according to the now defunct body NHS Protect

70,555

Number of attacks in 2015-16, the last year of NHS Protect statistics - a rise of almost a quarter over 2009-10



- Wide range of bespoke designs, frame colours and weatherproof finishes
- 10 year guarantee
- Professionally installed by skilled craftsmen
- Optional energy efficient heating and lighting
- Our glass verandas can be converted into an open glass room at any time
- Manufactured in all shapes & sizes to suit your home

Call us today for a **FREE** brochure and no obligation quotation

0800 107 2727

Quote **GU140323**

or visit our website

edenverandas.co.uk

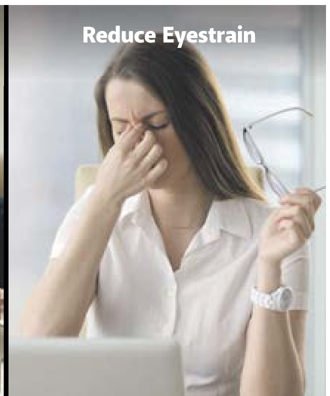
Eden Verandas is a trading style of Eden Verandas Ltd. Our registered address is Unit 13 Armstrong Mall, Southwood Business Park, Farnborough, GU14 0NR. Reg. No. 08259394. We are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority FRN 801638. We are a credit broker and not a lender and offer credit facilities from a panel of lenders. Terms & conditions apply. Credit is subject to status and affordability.

*Terms and conditions apply. **With our Buy Now Pay Later Product you will pay no interest if you repay the loan in full within 6 months from installation. If you prefer you can choose to spread the cost for longer and pay the minimum repayment outlined below at the end of the deferred period instead. Interest is calculated and charged from the date of payout. Cash Price £8000 less a deposit of £2000. You can pay nothing for 6 months (although you can if you wish) then settle the balance by the due date. Total amount repayable £8000. Alternatively 120 monthly repayments of £80.76 with the 1st payment commencing 6 months after installation of the goods. Total Charge for credit £3691.20 Total amount repayable £11691.20 (includes £2000 deposit. 9.9% APR Representative).



See Detail More Clearly





The Compact Light

ALL THE HELP YOUR EYES NEED

Have you noticed that trying to focus indoors places your eyes under strain? Perhaps you find it difficult to see small print or to thread a needle? This happens because our eyes have evolved under the daylight spectrum. Normal indoor light doesn't give them what they need to see detail in comfort.

The Compact Light uses powerful true-colour LEDs and a fully flexible arm to direct all its eye-soothing light exactly where you need it. The minimalist design and 2.5m cable mean you can place it pretty much anywhere. Or, why not go the whole hog and upgrade* to the cordless model giving up to 8 hours of battery use.

- **See detail clearly**
- **All the light on your page**
- **Includes 5W LED bulb**
- **Weighs only 1.5kg**
- **30 day risk-free trial**

feefo 4.9/5 (9,581 Reviews) 2023 Trusted Platinum Merchant

HALF-PRICE

Normally ~~£150~~ **Now £75**

Includes FREE Delivery. Quote 8285

While 2022 Stocks Last

I can read in bed again!

Mrs Christie | Norfolk

*Cordless upgrade is a costed extra.

For Advice. For Information. To Order:

0800 085 1088

seriousreaders.com/8285

Serious Readers® Light up your life indoors™

Nearing the 'abyss'
Attempts to defuse Israel crisis rejected
Page 28



'I did this for the craic'
Fifty men called Paddy changing the world
Page 31

Uproar as Macron bypasses parliament to drive through rise in pension age

Angelique Chrisafis
Paris

The French government has used controversial special constitutional powers to force through a rise in the pension age amid chaotic scenes in parliament in which radical left MPs sang the Marseillaise at the top of their voices to stop the prime minister, Élisabeth Borne, from speaking.

The president, Emmanuel Macron, took a last-minute decision to avoid a parliamentary vote and instead push through his unpopular plan to raise the pension age from 62 to 64.

Minutes before MPs in the lower house were to vote, Macron was still holding frantic meetings with senior political figures, and suddenly chose to use special powers instead of risking a vote which he appeared poised to lose.

He opted to invoke article 49.3 of the constitution, which gives the government power to bypass parliament.

MPs on the left shouted "Resign! Resign!" at Borne while members of the radical left party France Unbowed sang the national anthem so loudly that Borne could at first not speak and the session had to be suspended before she tried again to be heard.

Borne told parliament the bill would be pushed through because the government could not "gamble the future of our pensions".

Macron had told cabinet ministers that "the financial risks were too great" if the law had been rejected by MPs, according to reports from inside the talks at the Élysée.

Shortly afterwards, hundreds of people gathered in a spontaneous protest at Place de la Concorde in the centre of the city, as trade unions promised to intensify the strikes and street demonstrations that have taken place since January.

The head of the hardline CGT union, Philippe Martinez, said forcing through the law "shows contempt towards the people".

Politicians on the left called the government's move a major defeat and a sign of weakness. The government was accused of being brutal and undemocratic.

Borne had seemed aware in recent weeks of the uproar and protests that could be sparked by the use of "49.3" special powers and had appeared reluctant to use them.

Opposition politicians were expected to call for a vote of no confidence in the government within 24 hours. Whether this can pass would depend on how polarised opposition parties might group together.



▲ *Emmanuel Macron used special powers to force through his bill*

Any vote of no confidence would need the support of the right's Les Républicains to pass, but its leader, Eric Ciotti, said it would not support such a vote.

The political crisis over pension changes highlights how Macron's position has been severely undermined in the national assembly after his centrist grouping failed to win an absolute majority in parliamentary elections last June.

Without one, it had relied on winning over MPs from the Les Républicains party to support the pensions project, but then decided the numbers were not enough.

The Communist MP Fabien Roussel called on street protesters and trade unionists to keep mobilising.

Some politicians from the centrist Modem party, which is allied with Macron's Renaissance group in parliament, said forcing the bill through was a mistake.

Erwan Balanant, a Brittany Modem MP, said he had left the parliament chamber "in a state of shock". Other centrist MPs said it was a waste and showed weakness.

"It's a total failure for the government," the far-right leader Marine Le Pen told reporters afterwards, adding that Borne should resign.

Polls show that two-thirds of French people oppose the pension changes. Trade unions say they would penalise low-income people in manual jobs who tend to start their careers early, forcing them to work longer than graduates who are less affected by the changes.

The government has argued that raising the retirement age, scrapping privileges for some public sector workers and toughening criteria for a full pension are needed to prevent major deficits building up.

The change would also bring France into line with its European neighbours, most of which have raised the retirement age to 65 or above.



▶ *MPs hold up placards in the National Assembly opposing the rise in the pension age to 64*
PHOTOGRAPPH: BLONDET ELIOT/ABACA/REX

Q&A Why is president's plan so contentious?

What are Macron's proposed pension changes?
The minimum general retirement age will rise from 62 to 64, some public sector workers will lose privileges and there will be an accelerated increase in the number of years of work required to qualify for a full pension. The changes were part of Macron's manifesto for his re-election to a second term in office in 2022.

Hasn't Macron tried to make changes before?
Yes. In 2019, during his first term, he put forward a different plan to unify the complex French pension system, but at that time he did not want to raise the retirement age. There were many protests against those proposals and the plans were eventually shelved at the start of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

Who has been protesting on the streets in recent weeks?
In a rare show of unity, all trade unions – including the moderate centre – have led protests this year, organising some of the biggest demonstrations in decades, which peaked last Tuesday when an estimated 1.28 million people hit the streets. Transport workers, energy workers, dockers, teachers and public sector workers including museum staff have held strikes. Opinion polls show two-thirds of French people oppose the pension changes and support the protest movement.

Why are pensions such a political flashpoint in France?
The pension system is seen as the cornerstone of the cherished model of social protection. Unlike the market-led system of the UK, France has a pension system prized for what politicians call "solidarity between the generations" – whereby the working population pay mandatory payroll charges to fund those in retirement.

France has the lowest qualifying age for a state pension among the main European economies and spends a significant amount supporting the system. But the active working population pay high payroll charges and see fair pensions as the bedrock of how society should work.

Why did Macron use special powers to force through his plan?
Macron took a surprise, last-minute decision to use special powers to force the plans through without a vote because he was not certain of having the support of enough lawmakers. The use of special powers illustrates Macron's difficult position in parliament. He was left severely undermined in the National Assembly after his centrist grouping failed to win a majority in parliamentary elections last June amid major gains for the far right and radical left.

What happens next?
Politicians on the left have called on trade unions to continue strikes and street protests. Opposition politicians will put forward a vote of no-confidence in the government within the next 24 hours, which will lead to a vote, perhaps by Monday. But whether or not this could pass depends on how opposition parties, which are radically against one another, might group together. The radical left does not want to join with Marine Le Pen's far right.

Much rests on whether the rightwing party, Les Républicains, would vote for a motion of no confidence. It has not previously done so. The party's leader, Eric Ciotti, said yesterday that his party would not put its name to a no-confidence vote.

If a vote of no confidence did pass, Macron could stand down the cabinet and carry out a reshuffle to form a new government. He also has the power to decide to dissolve parliament and call a snap general election, although that is not his most likely choice.
Angelique Chrisafis

▼ *Mounted police in Tel Aviv confront people protesting against the overhaul of the judicial system*
PHOTOGRAPH: GIL COHEN-MAGEN/AFP/GETTY



Israeli president warns of civil war as Netanyahu rejects compromise plan

Bethan McKernan
Jerusalem

A compromise proposal on legislative changes presented by Israel's president, Isaac Herzog, has been rejected by the governing coalition, putting an end to hopes the country's political crisis can be immediately resolved.

In a televised address on Wednesday night, Herzog revealed his "people's directive" aimed at ending the 10-week standoff between the hardline government and the large protest movement, which is opposed to plans which would give politicians greater control of the judiciary.

The proposals have been criticised as undermining democratic norms and the rule of law, sparking mass protests that have united what is usually a highly polarised society, including strong opposition from military reservists and the normally apolitical tech sector. Israeli protesters returned to the streets yesterday, with some holding up placards saying the reforms spelled "the end of democracy".

The president said: "The last few weeks have been tearing us apart. Israel is in the throes of a profound crisis. Anyone who thinks that a real civil war, of human life, is a line that we will not reach has no idea. The abyss is within touching distance."

Herzog responded to the government's criticism, describing his proposals as a basis for work, change and precision. "This isn't the end of the discussion, only its beginning," he said. The president's role is largely ceremonial but he has repeatedly appealed to the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, to freeze the expedited passage of the legislative changes through the Knesset in order to open a dialogue with opposition parties.

Those efforts have come to nought, however, as did Wednesday's second attempt at a compromise plan. Netanyahu, seemingly under pressure from the more radical elements of the government, immediately turned it down.

"Unfortunately, the things the president presented were not agreed to by the coalition representatives, and central elements of the proposal don't bring the necessary balance between the branches [of government]," the prime minister said on Wednesday night before leaving for Germany.

Netanyahu continued to defend the disputed legal changes on his visit to Berlin, where the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, urged him to reconsider a compromise. Scholz said he was watching the debate unfold in Israel "with great concern".

Netanyahu put on a defiant front, arguing his plans merely sought to bring Israel's democracy "in line with what is common and acceptable in just about every western democracy". He also hit out at "slanders and falsifications" against his own and his coalition's intentions.

Among the proposals advanced by far-right members of Netanyahu's ruling coalition are bills that would allow politicians to appoint all supreme court judges, and an override clause that would mean a simple parliamentary majority could quash the court's rulings. The changes could help the prime minister avoid prosecution in his corruption trial, in which he denies all charges.

Proponents of the plans believe they are needed to counter a perceived leftwing bias in the court's decisions, but critics say neutering the court, in a country with no second legislative chamber, amounts to a "rightwing coup".

Ideas in Herzog's compromise include altering the selection committee for the high court to include three ministers, the court president, two judges and two civil servants, who would be agreed on by the court president and the justice minister.

> *'Anyone who thinks that a real civil war is a line we will not reach has no idea. The abyss is within touching distance'*
>
> **Isaac Herzog**
> *President of Israel*

Although some of the plan is clearly calibrated to appeal to ultra-Orthodox parties and members of Netanyahu's conservative Likud party who are uncomfortable with their new far-right coalition partners, "the people's directive" was rejected by the government as not far-reaching enough. Opposition parties greeted it with cautious enthusiasm.

According to Israeli media, Netanyahu delayed his flight to Berlin as he was in talks with coalition members over possible amendments to the planned judicial changes that would not lead to the collapse of his bloc's parliamentary majority.

Rumours are also growing that the prime minister may be seeking to ditch his extremist partners and form a coalition with a centrist party instead, which would not trigger an election.

Judicial row

What's at stake in PM's court shake-up

Bethan McKernan
Jerusalem

Among the far-reaching judicial measures proposed by Benjamin Netanyahu's government are plans to allow a simple majority of 61 in the 120-seat Knesset to override almost any supreme court rulings, and to allow politicians to appoint most of the justices to the bench.

The changes are spearheaded not by the prime minister, but by his Likud colleague and justice minister, Yariv Levin, and the Religious Zionist MP Simcha Rothman, who chairs the Knesset's law and justice committee.

Both men have a longstanding hatred of Israel's supreme court, which they see as too powerful and biased against the settler movement, Israel's ultra-religious community, and the Mizrahi population, Jewish people of Middle Eastern origin. In particular, many in Israel's right wing have never forgiven the court for a 2005 decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

It is not lost on anyone that the changes could help Netanyahu evade prosecution in his corruption trial or get the case dropped altogether. He denies all charges.

Why is this happening now?

Netanyahu's trial triggered four years of political crisis in which the country was split over whether the prime minister was fit to lead the country. After five elections in four years in which politicians on both sides of the aisle failed to form stable governments, a bloc of rightwing and religious parties, headed by Netanyahu's Likud, won a clear majority in elections last November, going on to form the most rightwing administration in Israeli history. Full annexation of the occupied West Bank, a rollback of pro-LGBTQ+ legislation and laws protecting women and minorities, and a loosening of the rules of engagement for Israeli police and soldiers are all on the coalition's agenda.

What do critics say?

The supreme court plays an outsized checks-and-balances role on government as Israel does not have a formal constitution or second legislative chamber, such as a senate. Worries that the reforms will result in the erosion of democratic norms and the rule of law have sparked the biggest protest movement in Israeli history, with hundreds of thousands of people taking to streets across the country, demonstrations outside the Knesset in Jerusalem, and several "days of disruption" in which protesters have blocked highways and Tel Aviv airport. A handful of the protests have turned violent.

The movement is largely leaderless, but unexpected pressure is coming from military reservists and Israel's hi-tech sector. Internationally, many of Israel's allies have expressed alarm over the direction the country is heading.

What happens next?

Attempts at compromise brokered by the president, Isaac Herzog, have been shot down by the government as unworkable. Although Israeli media has reported that Netanyahu would be willing to cut a deal, the prime minister appears to be hostage to his far-right partners, who could bring down the government if their demands are not met. Netanyahu could try to form a coalition with opposition parties, but most are wary of trusting him.

If the plans for the judiciary go ahead in their current form, Israel is likely to face an unprecedented constitutional crisis, in which the supreme court could strike down all or parts of the legislation designed to curb its powers, and the government could choose not to comply. Herzog has warned several times of civil war.

For the Palestinians, the prospect of a bolder and more hostile Israeli government has added to fears of a return to full-blown conflict, while Iran and other enemies are closely following what they see as internal weakness.

The window for any kind of compromise or negotiation with the opposition appears to be closing: the coalition is racing through committee hearings and full votes in the Knesset in order to pass the legislation before the Passover holiday begins on 2 April.



▲ *The judicial changes could help Benjamin Netanyahu evade prosecution in his corruption trial*



In at the deep end
A swimming pool sits on the edge of a landslide in Oceanside that followed heavy rains in California, in which more than 20 people have died.

PHOTOGRAPH: PATRICK T FALLON/AFP

Texas abortion pill hearing branded a 'kangaroo court'

Cecilia Nowell
Amarillo

Dozens of protesters gathered outside the JM Jones federal building in Amarillo, Texas, despite the judge's attempt not to publicise the Wednesday hearing on the future of a key abortion medication.

Holding signs that read: "Defend Medication Abortion" and "Not Your Uterus, Not Your Opinion", they chanted: "My body, my choice".

The four-hour hearing was held earlier in the day by Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, in a lawsuit challenging the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approval of mifepristone, one of two drugs used in more than 50% of all abortions in the US. A decision overturning approval of the drug would apply nationwide, not only in the states that have banned or restricted abortion.

The Women's March organisers who planned the protest lamented the fact that the hearing had not been publicised until Monday evening, preventing more protesters from travelling to the remote Texas city.

Citing threats to the court, Kacsmaryk had sought to keep the hearing secret, which prompted outrage from media groups that said his efforts were unconstitutional.

Organisers held a "kangaroo court" protest, with demonstrators dressed as judges and kangaroos.

The case could throw the FDA's authority to regulate drugs into disarray. Kacsmaryk said during Wednesday's hearing he would rule "as soon as possible".

Erik Baptist, the lead attorney for the Alliance Defending Freedom, a rightwing Christian group, said: "Any relief must be complete, universal and nationwide" as "the harms of chemical abortion drugs know no bounds". Medication abortion has been repeatedly found to be extremely safe.



▲ *A Women's March protester at the court building in Amarillo, Texas*

Julie Straus Harris, arguing for the Department of Justice, said: "Any injunction would cause significant harm by depriving patients of a drug that has been on the market for two decades."

One of the alliance's chief arguments is that the FDA abused its authority when it approved the pill. The FDA reviewed the drug under its accelerated approval programme, which was created in the early 1990s to speed access to the first HIV drugs.

The alliance, which was involved in the lawsuit that led the supreme court to overturn Roe v Wade, argues pregnancy is not a disease and mifepristone should not have been considered for accelerated approval.

If Kacsmaryk overturns the FDA approval of mifepristone, it is unclear how access to the drug would be affected.

Some abortion providers have said they would continue to prescribe misoprostol, the other drug used in the two-step protocol, which has been found to be effective on its own in ending pregnancies, although at a slightly lower rate than when used in conjunction with mifepristone.

Anti-abortion groups hope Kacsmaryk's conservative history is an indication he will rule in their favour.

Trump lawyers fight indictment over porn star

Hugo Lowell
New York

Donald Trump's legal team recently urged the Manhattan district attorney's office not to indict the former US president over his role in paying hush money to a porn star, arguing that the payments would have been made irrespective of his 2016 presidential candidacy, sources familiar with the matter have said.

The lawyer who represented the Trump team at the meeting with the district attorney's office, Susan Necheles, also argued that campaign funds had not been used for the payments to the porn star, Stormy Daniels, and they were therefore not a violation of campaign finance laws.

The arguments presented to the district attorney's office mark the most formal defence from the Trump team to date, as they attempt to settle on a strategy to avoid conviction in the event that the ex-president is charged with a misdemeanour or felony over the payments.

Trump may face an uphill struggle with those arguments, given that having "mixed motives" to protect himself personally and to protect his campaign could leave him liable, and the timing of the payments suggests there was an urgency to pay the money before the end of the 2016 campaign.

The effort to convince the district attorney, Alvin Bragg, not to bring charges may also prove futile amid increasing signals that an indictment is likely.

On Wednesday, Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen testified for around two hours before the grand jury and told the Guardian that he had provided the most complete account of the hush money scheme.

Cohen is the crucial witness because he paid the $130,000 (£107,000) to Daniels in October 2016, buying her silence about her alleged affair with Trump, who later reimbursed Cohen as president.

Cohen pleaded guilty in 2018 to federal charges over the hush money. The district attorney's case is likely to focus on how Trump and the Trump Organization handled the reimbursements.

Poland arrests nine over alleged plot to sabotage arms supplies to Ukraine

Shaun Walker

Polish authorities say they have detained nine members of a Russian spy ring who they say were gathering intelligence on weapons supplies to Ukraine and making plans to sabotage the deliveries.

Six people have been charged with preparing acts of sabotage and espionage, and charges are being prepared against the other three.

"Evidence indicates that this group monitored railway lines. Their tasks included recognising, monitoring and documenting weapons transports to Ukraine," the interior minister, Mariusz Kamiński, said. "The suspects were also preparing sabotage actions aimed at paralysing the supply of equipment, weapons and aid to Ukraine."

The Polish radio station RMF FM reported that at least 50 electronic spying devices had been installed by the network, and said the investigation into the ring had taken several months. Some of the devices were found close to the airport in the city of Rzeszów.

Poland's security service, the ABW, reportedly found cameras, electronic equipment and GPS location devices, apparently intended to be secreted on aid bound for Ukraine. Authorities say they have evidence the group were paid by Russian intelligence.

With Ukrainian airspace closed since the Russian invasion a year ago, the small Rzeszów airport has become the main transit point for military and humanitarian cargo on its way to Ukraine.

Last month, Joe Biden landed there en route to Kyiv, and numerous other leaders have passed through the airport, which is less than 50 miles from the border with Ukraine. US and other Nato troops are stationed at a nearby military base, and Washington has deployed Patriot air defence systems to protect the airfield.

The arrests are the latest in connection with a wave of alleged Russian espionage activity across Europe. In the wake of the invasion, European countries expelled hundreds of Russian diplomats, many of whom were believed to be intelligence officers working under diplomatic cover. Moscow has turned to other channels to run intelligence networks.

Authorities across Europe have detained several suspected "illegals" - Russian operatives posing as nationals of other countries.

Poland has made numerous arrests. Three days after Russia launched its invasion last year, Pablo González, a Spanish journalist of Russian origin, was arrested in the border town of Przemyśl and accused of working with Russia's military intelligence agency, the GRU. The case has not yet come to court.

Polish authorities have not named the suspects in the spy ring, or given details of their nationality, except to claim they were "foreigners from the east of Poland". Belarusian media reported yesterday that three of the detainees were citizens of Belarus.

Kamiński claimed that along with intelligence gathering and potential sabotage, the group had been tasked with "carrying out propaganda activities aimed at destabilising Polish-Ukrainian relations, fomenting hostile sentiments in Poland towards Nato, and attacking the actions of the Polish government towards Ukraine".

Ukrainians queue for aid during the evacuation process in Chasiv Yar, near Bakhmut, yesterday
PHOTOGRAPH: DIEGO HERRERA CARCEDO/GETTY



Russia Soldier sentenced for revealing killing

Pjotr Sauer

A Russian soldier who confessed to killing a civilian in Ukraine last year has been given a five-and-a-half-year suspended jail sentence by a military court in Russia's far east on charges of spreading "fake news" about the army. In an interview with the independent news outlet IStories last August, Daniil Frolkin, 21, said he shot and killed a male civilian in Andriivka, a village near Kyiv.

"I tell him: 'Get down on your knees.' And I just put a bullet through his forehead. Killed one person," Frolkin told IStories.

IStories identified the dead man as Ruslan Yaremchuk, 47. Frolkin was part of the 64th Motor Rifle Brigade, a notorious unit based in the Khabarovsk region that has been accused of war crimes in Bucha.

The sentencing is widely seen as a way to deter other service personnel from speaking out.

WIN A CAR
ONCE OWNED BY
HM QUEEN ELIZABETH II



TEXT CAR
TO 81155

to enter the prize draw & make a voluntary £10 donation



COMIC RELIEF
RED NOSE DAY
FRIDAY 17 MARCH

You can also enter by post. Prize draw ends 31 March 2023 at 11:59am for text entries and 5 April 2023 for postal entries. You must be aged 18 or over and have the billpayer's permission to enter. Entries will be charged at your standard network message rate. Once we receive confirmation of your entry, a one-off voluntary donation of £10 will be made to the registered charity Comic Relief. You will have an opportunity to opt out of the donation. For postal information and full terms and conditions visit **comicrelief.com/win**

Red Nose Day is an initiative of Comic Relief, operating name of Charity Projects, registered charity in England & Wales (326568) and Scotland (SC039730).

The power of 'Paddy'
Exhibition highlights talented Irishmen challenging a cliche



Paddy Barnes, boxer who competed in the Olympics

Rory Carroll
Ireland correspondent

The quintessential Irish name is famous often for the wrong reasons. There are Paddy jokes, Paddy wagons and "thick Paddies" – the latter a generic insult used against anyone from Ireland.

It seldom matters if a person's given name is Patrick, Pádraig, Pádraic or Pat. In the eyes of the world and fellow Irish people, that still makes him Paddy and an embodiment of Irishness.

A cultural photography project, Paddy Irishman, is now challenging the stereotypes with an exhibition of 50 Paddies of various ages, ethnicities and sexualities.

The installation opened at Pershing Square outside Grand Central Station, New York, this week in the run-up to the city's St Patrick's Day parade today, displaying close-up portraits of Paddies who are astrophysicists artists, activists, architects, and athletes. Included is also a sheep shearer, a composer, film director, illustrator, make-up artist, jockey, schoolboy, and entrepreneur.

The youngest is Paddy Ischenko, a baby born in Dublin to a Ukrainian mother who named him Patrick to thank her adopted country for providing refuge.

"There has always been a stereotype that followed Irish males around the world," said Ross O'Callaghan, a cinematographer who photographed the participants. "My intention was to put together all these stories and tell a real-life story of Paddies. It tells a wonderful story of Ireland, where we are now as a country and where we are going."

The exhibition comes less than a week after a Saturday Night Live skit and the Oscars' host, Jimmy Kimmel, revived tropes of the Irish as brawlers and drinkers with impenetrable accents.

"I don't think we should try to censor the stereotype but we should try to challenge it," said O'Callaghan, who collaborated with the creative directors Roisin Keown and Peter Snodden. The exhibition is the culmination of three years of work and a callout that drew more than 1,000 Paddies across Ireland. The Guardian featured some in a picture gallery last year.

The inspiration for the project was Paddy Bradley, 43, an architect who built a shipping container home on his family's farm in County Derry, which was named the grandest design of all time by the Channel 4 TV show Grand Designs. "I was never aware there were so many people named Paddy or Patrick from so many different backgrounds," Bradley said. "I was blown away by the talents." The exhibition subverted enduring cliches of the Irish as drunks, he said. "It is a wee joke but it's sort of offensive at the same time … These Paddies are changing the world."

Some are famous, such as the golfer Pádraig Harrington, the TV personality Patrick Kielty, and a member of the Birmingham Six, Paddy Hill, who served 16 years in jail after being wrongly convicted of an IRA bombing. Others are well known in their fields, such as Paddy Barnes, an Olympic boxer.

Most are not well known. Included is Paddy O'Connor, who served time in a Jamaican prison for smuggling cocaine and successfully campaigned for better conditions for inmates and guards, and Paddy O'Donohoe, 49, Ireland's first professional body piercer.

Paddy Hazleton, 32, who was born in Uganda and grew up in Co Sligo, is a professional bodhrán player. "I did this for the craic," he said. "Ireland's changed so much, and this debunks the stereotype of the hooligan in the bar."







▲ *Participants in the cultural project that aims to subvert the trope of the Irish 'Paddy' include Paddy Hazlton, a bodhrán player; architect Paddy Bradley, right, who inspired the project with his shipping container home; and the sheep farmer Paddy Liam O'Brien. The exhibition in New York opens today, St Patrick's Day*
PHOTOGRAPHS: ROSS O'CALLAGHAN

> ***'Ireland's changed so much. This debunks the stereotype of a hooligan in the bar'***
>
> **Paddy Hazleton**
> *Bodhrán musician*

Honest citizens of Tokyo hand in a record £24.5m of lost cash to police

Justin McCurry
Tokyo

The honest citizens of Tokyo handed in a record ¥3.99bn (£24.5m) in lost cash to police last year – an average of more than £67,000 a day.

Japan's national police agency said the amount was up ¥600m from the previous year, and beat the previous high of ¥3.84bn declared at police stations across the capital in 2019.

There was relief, too, for at least some of those who had mislaid their money. The police department's lost and found office said it had returned almost ¥3bn, while ¥480m was given to those who had discovered the cash and reported it.

In all, 3.43m items were handed in to police in 2022. Driving licences and other forms of ID comprised the biggest number – 730,000 items – followed by 390,000 commuter and rechargeable "IC" public transport cards. There were also about 300,000 gloves and other items of clothing, and a similar number of wallets.

Under Japan's lost goods law, anyone who finds money must give it to the police, but they can claim a reward of between 5% and 20% if it is retrieved by the owner. If the cash has not been claimed after three months, it all goes to the finder. If the finder does not claim the money within two further months, it becomes the property of the local government.

Police attributed the rise in cash finds to signs that the pandemic was coming to an end. The large amounts of money are a symptom of Japan's attachment to hard cash and a cultural resistance to paying on the never never.

"It could be a result of the surge in people out and about after coronavirus border control measures were drastically eased, and the resumption of socio-economic activities," an official told the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper.

The Tokyo metropolitan police department has urged the public to be particularly careful during the cherry blossom viewing season, when groups celebrate with picnics and, a frequent factor in losing property, copious amounts of alcohol.

Not everyone believes honesty is the best policy, however. Police in the island of Hokkaido are trying to locate the owner of ¥10m in cash found by a rubbish collection worker in the city of Sapporo in January. Thirteen people have said the money was theirs since the police announced the find last month.

¥3bn
Amount returned to owners of the ¥3.99bn lost. Finders got unclaimed cash or rewards of ¥480m



We've made our thought-provoking culture writing available for less than you might think. As well as Saturday magazine, the New Review or What's On, subscribers to our award-winning newspapers and magazines can now explore key moments from the worlds of politics, sport and more.

Package	Newsstand price per month	Subscription rate	Saving
Every day	~~£84.50~~	£60.99	27%
Six day	~~£69.33~~	£53.99	22%
Weekend	~~£30.33~~	£24.99	17%
Saturday	~~£15.17~~	£13.99	7%
Sunday	~~£15.17~~	£13.99	7%

Prices above are monthly. Savings calculated are savings made per month against the retail price.

Scan the QR code to subscribe
or visit theguardian.com/paper-press

The Guardian | The Observer

Open to UK mainland and NI residents aged 18+. The savings calculation is based upon the saving made per month against the retail price of all products included in the subscription package. The Guardian and Observer reserve the right to end this offer at any time. Details correct at the time of printing. For full subscription terms and conditions visit theguardian.com/subscription/terms.

FTSE 100	All share	Dow Indl	Nikkei 225	£/€	£/$
+65.58	+34.38	+324.07	-218.87	1.1404	1.2111
7410.03	4051.38	32198.64	27010.61	-0.0017	+0.0081

Business

ECB raises interest rates despite fear of domino effect for banks

Phillip Inman
Kalyeena Makortoff

The European Central Bank has raised interest rates across the eurozone by half a percentage point, despite fears that higher borrowing costs could set off a domino effect across a banking sector already reeling from a collapse in confidence in Switzerland's second largest lender, Credit Suisse.

Officials at the ECB, the central bank covering the 19-member eurobloc, said inflation was likely to remain high "for too long", forcing it to continue with its planned run of rate increases. The 0.5 percentage point rise pushes the central bank's main rate up to 3.5%, while the rate paid on eurozone bank deposits left at the ECB increases to 3%.

At its last meeting in February, the ECB had clearly signalled its intention to raise the rate this month, but markets had been betting on a last minute U-turn in light of this week's turmoil.

The decision to push ahead with inflation control measures came hours after the Swiss Central Bank stepped in with a 50bn Swiss franc (£44bn) loan facility for Credit Suisse designed to calm fears over the finances of the lender, one of 30 banks globally deemed too big to fail.

Without referring to the overnight rescue loan, the ECB said yesterday that its governing council was "monitoring current market tensions closely" and stood "ready to respond as necessary to preserve price stability and financial stability in the euro area".

In a statement designed to quell fears over contagion among banks, the ECB said: "The euro area banking sector is resilient, with strong capital and liquidity positions. In any case, the ECB's policy toolkit is fully equipped to provide liquidity support to the euro area financial system if needed and to preserve the smooth transmission of monetary policy."

Christine Lagarde, the president of the ECB, said the central bank would treat the heightened tensions in financial markets separately from its strategy for bringing down inflation.

While the ECB recognised a link between the two, Lagarde said: "We don't see a trade off between price stability and financial stability and handle them separately. We are not waning on our commitment to fight inflation and we are determined to return inflation back to the 2% target in the medium term."

3.5%

The European Central Bank's main interest rate - up from 3% despite expectations of a crisis-led U-turn

She added that "there were three or four dissenters" on the ECB's governing board who had argued for a pause in rate rises, but otherwise it "moved quickly" to its decision.

Fears over Credit Suisse, the world's 17th-largest bank, wiped more than £75bn off the FTSE 100 on Wednesday, with banking stocks across Europe taking a pummelling.

The sell-off was triggered when the chair of Saudi National Bank, the largest Credit Suisse shareholder, ruled out any further investment. The comments spooked markets as they came days after the collapse of US lender Silicon Valley Bank.

Several economists, including Nouriel Roubini, the New York University professor credited with predicting the 2008 banking crash, had warned that a 0.5% interest rise by the ECB could be the trigger for a broad-based solvency problem across the financial industry.

Analysts at JP Morgan said low confidence left Credit Suisse with three credible options: fully closing its investment bank, convincing the central bank to guarantee all customer deposits and potentially part-nationalising the lender, or welcoming a sale to larger Swiss rival UBS.

Credit Suisse declined to comment.

No staff bonus at John Lewis after losses lead to job cuts warning

Sarah Butler

John Lewis and Waitrose staff will not get a bonus this year after the retail group fell into the red, posting a worse than expected £230m full-year loss.

Sharon White, the chairman of the John Lewis Partnership, warned of job losses to come as she said "inflation hit us like a hurricane", with higher freight, energy, labour and fuel bills adding £180m in costs. These helped push the group into the second full-year loss in John Lewis's history.

White said some Waitrose shoppers had turned to the discounters, as the business "saw a post-Covid shift in grocery from online to shops" and belts tightened at a time of record-low consumer confidence.

She said the outlook remained uncertain because inflation, though diminishing, was still around and consumer confidence, which is rising, remained subdued.

The staff-owned group said it made an underlying pre-tax loss of £78m in the year to 28 January, compared with analysts' expectations of £50m and an £181m profit a year before. Write-downs of the value of Waitrose stores after poor trading took the overall loss much higher.



▲ *Department store sales remained steady but more Waitrose shoppers turned to discount supermarkets*
PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX LENTATI/LNP

White apologised to staff, who are known as partners because they jointly own the business, for not paying an annual bonus for only the second time since 1953 after "a tough set of results".

However, she defended her plan to cut costs and invest in new areas such as financial services and building homes to rent above stores. "I couldn't be more confident that we could convert more of our £12bn-plus of sales into sustainable profit. We have a strong balance sheet and a prudent strategy to support long-term growth," White said.

She said there was a "clear path to profit" although the group did not pledge to return to the black this year - potentially spelling another lost bonus for workers in 2024.

Sales for the group fell 2% to £12.25bn as steady figures at its department store chain only partly offset a 3% fall in sales at Waitrose. White said Waitrose had attracted 800,000 more customers but every one had spent less. Supermarket sales fell £7.3bn, with the number of items sold down by 10%.

White said the group was responding to its difficulties by tripling its target for cost savings to £900m by January 2026.

"The mantra for the year is cost out, margins up and customer focus," she said, adding: "As we need to become more efficient and productive, that will have an impact on our number of partners."

First Republic shares recover ground as big US lenders ponder rescue

Dominic Rushe

Some of the US's biggest banks are considering a rescue bid for First Republic, a mid-sized lender whose shares have been pummelled amid a wider banking turmoil.

Citigroup, Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and Wells Fargo are among the banks discussing a lifeline for the San Francisco-based lender, according to the Wall Street Journal.

The Journal also reported that top executives at First Republic had sold millions of dollars in shares in the bank in the two months leading up to its share price collapse. In total, insiders have sold $11.8m (£9.7m) worth of stock so far this year.

First Republic's shares fell 22% yesterday morning but bounced back after the news of a possible deal. They have dropped by almost 70% over the past five trading days and the bank's market capitalisation has fallen from $21bn on 8 March, when the Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) crisis began, to less than $5bn.

Any deal would need to be passed by regulators, and the Journal said the situation was highly uncertain.

First Republic, known for its affluent customer base, has been hit hard following the collapse of SVB, which was seized by federal regulators over the weekend.

Like some other regional banks, First Republic has a large proportion of uninsured deposits above the $250,000 government-insured limit. SVB's uninsured deposits accounted for 94% of its total. About 68% of First Republic deposits are uninsured, according to S&P Global, far lower than SVB but high enough to worry investors and depositors.

Customers have pulled billions in deposits from the bank, and S&P Global Ratings downgraded its credit rating to junk on Tuesday.

Over the weekend First Republic announced it had secured a further $70bn in financing from the Federal Reserve and JP Morgan.

"First Republic's capital and liquidity positions are very strong, and its capital remains well above the regulatory threshold for well-capitalised banks," Jim Herbert, its founder and executive chairman, and Mike Roffler, its CEO and president, said in a statement. But the announcement appears to have done little to assuage investor and customer fears.

Speaking to Congress yesterday, the US treasury secretary, Janet Yellen, said the US banking system remained sound.

Business view
Nils Pratley



Things happen fast in banking. Credit Suisse's restructuring is moving a little bit too slowly

Midnight manoeuvres by central bankers don't always work, but the Swiss National Bank clearly did the right thing by advancing a 50bn franc (£44.5bn) liquidity facility to beleaguered Credit Suisse. The action has bought some time for everybody to breathe and take stock. Credit Suisse itself did its bit by saying it would repurchase about $3bn (£2.5bn) of its own debt, presumably at an enormous discount to face value, to improve its financial ratios.

As it happens, the bank's liquidity ratios were reportedly fine anyway, but extra capacity still matters when the worry is depositors yanking their money. In any case, once Credit Suisse had asked for a new facility, the request had to be granted. Refusal would have been devastating: a globally systemic bank cannot be left to flap in the wind.

Credit Suisse's shares rebounded yesterday (although a net fall of 15% over four days this week should be nobody's idea of a triumph) and the wider European banking sector enjoyed a better day.

Job done? Of course not. The next question is whether the Swiss authorities will be happy to trust that Credit Suisse's current self-help strategy is bold enough to overcome a crisis that has been 10 years in the making. It would be a risky bet.

One reason for the market's distrust is that chief executive Ulrich Körner's turnaround programme will take three years to complete. Everything's on track on the job-slashing front after six months, but the centrepiece of the rejig is meant to be a semi-separation of the investment bank, a task that remains firmly in "work in progress" territory.

Even the exact shape of the bits to go, and the bits to be retained, is still to be settled. And, since late 2024 is probably the earliest a spin-off could happen, there is a long period to navigate before "new Credit Suisse" emerges.

Maybe that period is simply too long. In the new banking climate, as we've seen in the past fortnight, life can move quickly and in unexpected directions.

Alternative strategies might involve separating Swiss Bank, the domestic bank and best-performing division in recent years, or selling the asset management operation. It seems neither course is currently being contemplated, however – perhaps because removing the strongest parts from the weakest might make matters worse in the interim. A grand combination with UBS – a few analysts' idea of an escape route – would take ages to execute but might fit the bill as a definitive outcome that the market can believe in. Or get the investment bank off the books sooner by closing it.

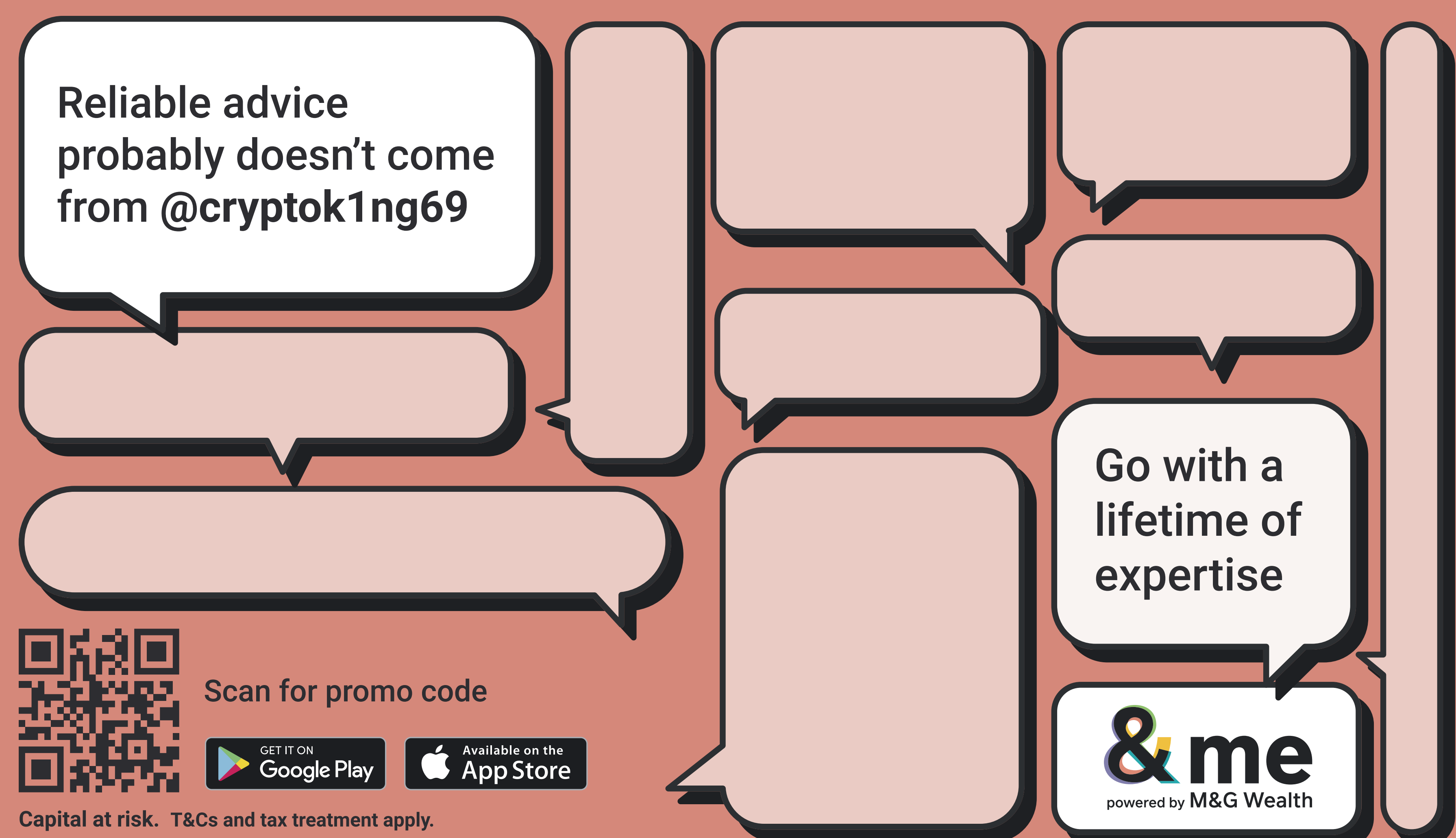


▲ *Credit Suisse has been stabilised by funds from the Swiss central bank*

> *A long overhaul at Deutsche Bank delivered on most of its promises eventually. Yet today's financial conditions feel rougher*

A long overhaul at Deutsche Bank, one could counter, delivered on most of its promises eventually, despite many outsiders' predictions of calamity circa 2016. Yet today's financial conditions feel rougher. Credit Suisse's current leisurely timetable can't take many more setbacks. The picture of deposit outflows from the wealth management division, which caters for the financial needs of family offices and megabucks individuals, is said to be improving. What if it gets worse again after the latest turn in the spotlight?

The wider good news, of a sort, is that the past week has brought reassuring reminders that big and hairy global banks like Credit Suisse – as opposed to under-regulated second-tier lenders like Silicon Valley Bank in the US – have capital structures that are designed to cope with a true emergency. The stack of capital can be "bailed in" to absorb losses in ways that weren't possible in the 2007-09 banking crisis. But, for Credit Suisse itself, the strategic questions are piling up. The pressure has only been relieved a little.



To benefit from the promotion you must be 18+ and resident in the UK.
The promotion closes on 30 April 2023 at 23:59h. For more information visit mandgwealth.me/welcome2023

MPs call in Ofcom over 'breach of service duty' by Royal Mail

Alex Lawson

The chief executive of Royal Mail has been accused of "incompetence or cluelessness" by MPs who are calling on the regulator Ofcom to investigate whether the company broke legal service requirements.

Parliament's cross-party business, energy and industrial strategy committee has asked the watchdog to investigate a suspected breach of the universal service obligation (USO), which requires the postal operator to deliver letters nationwide six days a week.

MPs have accused Royal Mail of prioritising parcels over letters and will say today that the company has "systemically failed to deliver" parts of its obligations.

Royal Mail's chief executive, Simon Thompson, gave evidence to the committee in January but, in an unusual move, was recalled last month after he was accused of giving an inaccurate testimony.

Thompson then admitted digital tracking devices carried by postal workers had been used to pressure them to work faster, and blamed rogue managers for using the information in breach of company policy.

The chair of the committee, Darren Jones, said that, after the first hearing, he had received almost 1,500 communications, with evidence that showed tracking information from postal digital assistants carried by workers was "100% being used" to discipline and performance-manage staff. Thompson has argued that the devices are used to "balance the workload evenly" across the team.

Jones said: "I find it hard to believe that such widespread breaches of company policy and legal obligations are down to a national network of rogue workers conspiring against management at Royal Mail."

The Labour MP said the committee had been "inundated" with evidence "challenging the accuracy of answers" given by Thompson. "Frankly, the failures in company policy which Mr Thompson has admitted to can only be due to either an unacceptable level of incompetence or an unacceptable level of cluelessness about what is happening at Royal Mail," he said.

In a report by the committee, MPs noted Royal Mail had failed to hit first-class delivery targets every year since 2017. The company's "USO performance has definitely not been good enough", Thompson told MPs.

Relations between Royal Mail executives and its workforce have been strained during a months-long dispute over pay and working conditions that has led to strikes. Talks with the Communication Workers Union, which represents about 115,000 postal workers, continue. Royal Mail has threatened to separate its domestic and international businesses if "significant operational change" cannot be agreed.

A spokesperson for the company said: "Royal Mail is proud to deliver the universal service, and our policies are clear that parcels and letters should be treated with equal importance. We have informed the committee that we will be reviewing the consistent application of our policies regarding the delivery of letters and parcels." The company said it would share the findings of the review with Ofcom and rejected the suggestion MPs were misled.

Ofcom said: "Royal Mail's recent performance is clearly well short of where it should be. We're very concerned about this and have asked the company to explain what it's doing to bring service levels back up as a matter of urgency."

Firm behind slimming jab is suspended from British trade body

Nicola Davis
Science correspondent

The firm behind the slimming jab Wegovy has been suspended from the UK's pharmaceutical trade body after a row over sponsored weight-loss courses that promoted its medicines.

The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) said an extensive investigation by the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority found Novo Nordisk to be in breach of the ABPI code of practice.

The ABPI said this included a clause relating to actions "likely to bring discredit on, or reduce confidence in, the pharmaceutical industry".

As a result the Danish firm has been suspended from the ABPI for two years, with a return to full membership dependent on further audits in late 2023 and 2024 that will need to show significant and sustained improvement to industry standards. Patients will still be able to access available drugs produced by Novo Nordisk, such as Saxenda.

The move is notable not just because Novo Nordisk has received media attention in recent weeks over the approval of Wegovy for use in the NHS, but because the ABPI's president until last month was Pinder Sahota, the general manager and corporate vice-president of Novo Nordisk UK. Sahota stepped down from the ABPI in February to prevent the row "becoming a distraction from the vital work of the ABPI".

According to an interim report from the ABPI's code of practice appeal board, released before the results of the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority's investigation, the row revolves around Novo Nordisk's sponsorship of a free weight management course, first seen on LinkedIn, which featured another of its weight-loss jabs called Saxenda, also known as liraglutide.

A key concern was that Novo Nordisk did not make clear it had paid for the courses, or that they were promotional meetings. It also appeared that part of what Novo Nordisk was offering individual health professionals was a patient group direction that would allow them to give the drug without a prescription from a doctor or other prescriber. The report says: "This had a value and it was being given to individuals for their own personal benefit to run private clinics which was bribing health professionals with an inducement to prescribe."

A Novo Nordisk spokesperson said: "While we are disappointed with this outcome, we accept the decision. We will continue to strengthen our compliance framework, and remain committed to following the ABPI code of practice and maintaining the highest possible ethical standards required by the pharmaceutical industry."



◀ *The Boeing 747 Cosmic Girl and the rocket LauncherOne at Spaceport Cornwall before a failed satellite launch mission in January*
PHOTOGRAPH: UK SPACE AGENCY/PA

44%
Decline in Virgin Orbit's share price this year, including an 18.8% fall after news of the pause in its operations

Virgin Orbit pauses operations and furloughs most of its staff

Alex Lawson

Virgin Orbit has paused its operations and furloughed its workforce as it hunts for a funding lifeline.

The satellite launch company, based in California, will put all work on hold for at least a week, with just a skeleton team remaining at work.

Bosses told employees at an all-staff meeting on Wednesday that the remainder of the workforce would be put on unpaid furlough, although employees can cash in annual leave.

The decision comes after the failure in January of Virgin Orbit's attempt to put the first satellites launched from UK soil into orbit.

The company's chief executive, Dan Hart, told staff that putting them on furlough would buy time to finalise a new investment plan, Reuters reported. Staff are expected to be updated next week.

The pause spooked investors, and sent shares down 18.8% to 82 cents. The stock, listed on the US Nasdaq exchange, is down 44% this year.

The company said: "Virgin Orbit is initiating a company-wide operational pause, effective March 16, 2023, and anticipates providing an update on go-forward operations in the coming weeks."

Thousands of people gathered near Newquay in January to witness the historic Start Me Up mission, which took off from Spaceport Cornwall with the aim of blasting nine satellites into orbit.

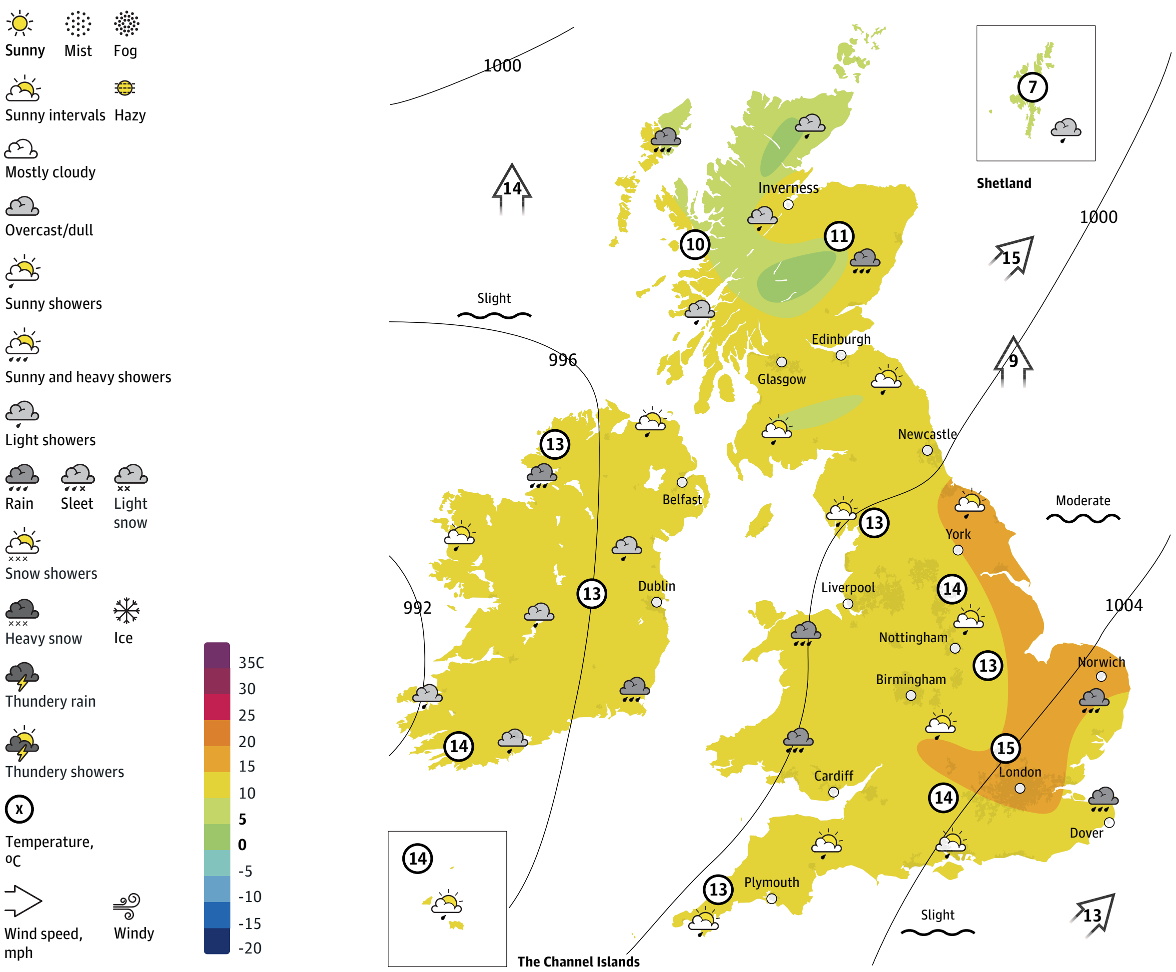
A converted Boeing 747 called Cosmic Girl successfully released its rocket, called LauncherOne and carrying a payload of nine satellites, off the south coast of Ireland. But shortly afterwards, Virgin Orbit announced there had been "an anomaly" and that the rocket had failed to reach the required altitude. The rocket and satellites were lost.

Virgin Orbit said its investigation into the failure of the Start Me Up mission was nearly complete. It added: "Our next production rocket with the needed modification incorporated is in final stages of integration and test".

The company was founded by the billionaire Sir Richard Branson and is 75% owned by Virgin Investments. Branson put a further $5m (£4.1m) into the company this month, bringing his investment in the venture to $60m over the past four months.

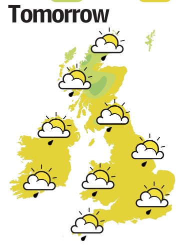
Weather
Friday 17 March 2023

UK and Ireland Noon today

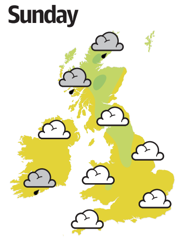


Forecast

Low 8 High 13
Tomorrow



Low 4 High 11
Sunday



Carbon count

Daily atmospheric CO_2 readings from Mauna Loa, Hawaii (ppm):

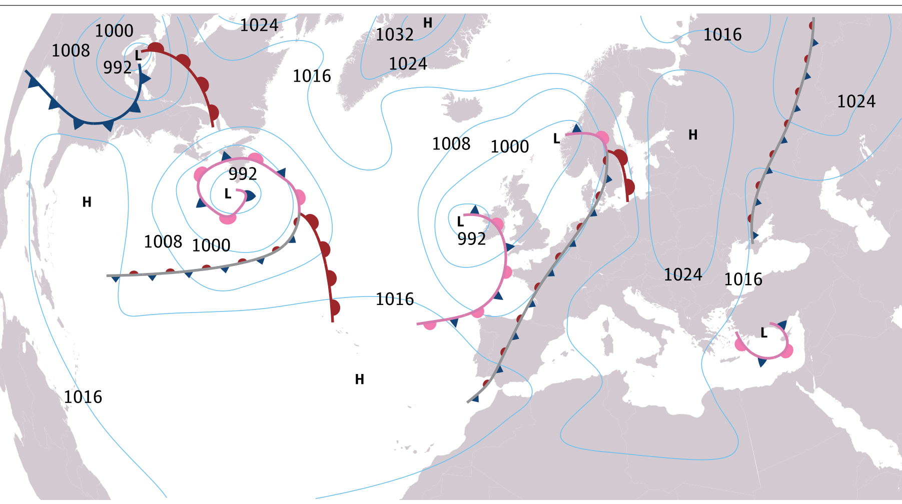
Latest	
13 Mar 2023	420.01
Weekly average	
05 Mar 2023	421.10
16 Mar 2022	418.52
16 Mar 2013	397.49
Pre-industrial base	*280*
Safe level	*350*

Source: NOAA-ESRL

Around the UK

	Lows and highs		Precipitation	Air pollution
London	9	15	80%	Low
Manchester	8	14	90%	Low
Edinburgh	7	13	85%	Low
Belfast	8	13	85%	Low
Birmingham	8	14	80%	Low
Brighton	9	12	80%	Low
Bristol	8	13	80%	Low
Cardiff	8	13	90%	Low
Newcastle	6	14	85%	Low
Penzance	9	13	90%	Low

Atlantic front



Cold front

Warm front

Occluded front

Trough

High tides

Source: © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Times are local UK times

Aberdeen	**0912**	3.4m	**2216**	3.6m
Avonmouth	**0208**	9.5m	**1515**	9.7m
Barrow	**0701**	7.1m	**1953**	7.3m
Belfast	**0634**	2.8m	**1932**	2.8m
Cobh	**0029**	3.2m	**1318**	3.1m
Cromer	**0210**	3.9m	**1440**	3.9m
Dover	**0704**	5.3m	**1946**	5.3m
Dublin	**0721**	3.3m	**2018**	3.4m
Galway	**0036**	4.0m	**1336**	4.0m
Greenock	**0717**	2.6m	**2037**	2.7m
Harwich	**0701**	3.1m	**1942**	3.0m
Holyhead	**0608**	4.5m	**1906**	4.5m
Hull	**0127**	5.7m	**1409**	5.8m
Leith	**1023**	4.3m	**2321**	4.6m
Liverpool	**0645**	7.4m	**1937**	7.5m
London Bridge	**0906**	5.8m	**2154**	5.6m
Lossiemouth	**0713**	3.1m	**2024**	3.3m
Milford Haven	**0131**	5.2m	**1424**	5.2m
Newquay	**0030**	5.2m	**1321**	5.3m
North Shields	**--**	--	**1121**	4.0m
Oban	**0211**	3.0m	**1507**	2.9m
Penzance	**--**	--	**1254**	4.2m
Plymouth	**0047**	4.3m	**1349**	4.2m
Portsmouth	**0717**	3.8m	**2010**	3.9m
Southport	**0546**	7.1m	**1845**	7.2m
Stornoway	**0256**	3.8m	**1550**	3.7m
Weymouth	**0205**	0.6m	**1511**	0.5m
Whitby	**--**	--	**1153**	4.4m
Wick	**0653**	2.7m	**2004**	2.8m
Workington	**0710**	6.4m	**2003**	6.5m

Sun & Moon



Sun rises	0610
Sun sets	1807
Moon rises	0445
Moon sets	1200
New Moon	21 March

Forecasts and graphics provided by **AccuWeather** ©2023

Lighting up

Belfast	1832 to 0633
Birm'ham	1814 to 0615
Brighton	1808 to 0609
Bristol	1818 to 0619
Carlisle	1818 to 0620
Cork	1841 to 0642
Dublin	1832 to 0633
Glasgow	1825 to 0626
Harlech	1824 to 0625
Inverness	1823 to 0625
London	1807 to 0608
M'chester	1816 to 0617
Newcastle	1814 to 0615
Norwich	1802 to 0603
Penzance	1830 to 0630

Weatherwatch

March weather has been a rollercoaster ride, with spring held back by cold and turbulence - a reminder that worse extremes will come if we do not reduce our carbon footprint.

One of the big problems for many of us is a lack of knowledge about how to change our lifestyles to stop making the situation worse.

Even those with quite a good idea of how carbon footprints work do not have an easy way of measuring how they are doing.

An enjoyable way to find out is the Climate Hero carbon calculator, a five-minute quiz about your lifestyle choices that gives you a personal carbon emissions figure.

The questions are about where you live, how you heat your home, your methods of travel, what you eat and how you shop.

The quiz gives you a pat on the back for a good score and lets you know how close you are to "climate hero" status. However, honesty is required to get the greatest potential benefit.

Based on the answers you provide there is a series of useful hints on the amount of carbon that can be saved with each change of lifestyle, so it offers everyone a way to feel they are doing their bit.

Paul Brown

Around the world

Algiers	22	Lisbon	17
Ams'dam	14	Madrid	17
Athens	13	Malaga	23
Auckland	23	Melb'rne	24
B Aires	30	Mexico C	24
Bangkok	34	Miami	27
Barcelona	16	Milan	15
Basra	26	Mombasa	33
Beijing	8	Moscow	5
Berlin	14	Mumbai	32
Bermuda	20	N Orleans	23
Brussels	16	Nairobi	26
Budapest	12	New Delhi	27
C'hagen	8	New York	14
Cairo	25	Oslo	4
Cape Town	22	Paris	16
Chicago	4	Perth	25
Corfu	17	Prague	12
Dakar	26	Reykjavik	1
Dhaka	31	Rio de J	28
Dublin	12	Rome	15
Florence	18	Shanghai	10
Gibraltar	21	Singapore	31
H Kong	25	Stockh'm	3
Harare	26	Strasb'g	20
Helsinki	1	Sydney	29
Istanbul	9	Tel Aviv	23
Jo'burg	25	Tenerife	22
K Lumpur	35	Tokyo	13
K'mandu	20	Toronto	8
Kabul	16	Vancouv'r	11
Kingston	30	Vienna	12
Kolkata	31	Warsaw	9
L Angeles	17	Wash'ton	17
Lagos	33	Well'ton	21
Lima	27	Zurich	18

Six Nations

Ireland recall Henshaw for England clash

Page 40 →

Cheltenham Festival

Galopin Des Champs fancied for the Gold Cup

Page 39 →



Sport



▲ *Ben Chilwell has become one of the core players used by Graham Potter in Chelsea's mini-revival*
JAMES WILLIAMSON /AMA/ GETTY IMAGES

Upward curve

Potter's Chelsea find that consistency in selection translates into positive results



Karen Carney

It may sound funny, but Chelsea should not worry about their Premier League points tally for the rest of the season. Instead, they need to use this time to make sure they are ready to hit the ground running in August.

Graham Potter was appointed Chelsea manager in September and it has taken time to instil his culture and philosophy, but we are starting to see the green shoots. Football is a demanding environment and people want overnight success, but whenever a manager comes in he needs to learn about the players and vice versa.

Chelsea recruited heavily in the summer and January windows. Getting these players to settle in a new city and culture is hard. When a person starts a new job, they are not up to speed immediately; they have to learn how they fit into the role and what those around them do. They will not settle until they fully understand the office dynamics. This also happens in football.

In addition to the new coaching staff and players, Chelsea have made changes in the medical department. This level of upheaval is not straightforward to deal with and allowing things to settle is important for the long-term health of the team and the club structure.

Potter has also had a number of players out injured, losing Armando Broja, Édouard Mendy, César Azpilicueta, Thiago Silva, Reece James and N'Golo Kanté, which does not help attempts to form a cohesive unit.

Focusing on the Champions League is the best idea for Chelsea because it is all they have to play for. Encouragingly for them, they are finally producing consistent performances and Potter is relying on a core group who understand his methods. In Chelsea's three wins last week, against Leeds, Borussia Dortmund and Leicester, eight players started every match and this will help build relationships within the team.

Previously, Potter has tinkered regularly with the lineup, trying to find the perfect blend. I was at Stamford Bridge for the game against Manchester City at the beginning of January when he was pulling people off after 70 minutes. It was like a pre-season friendly when you give players allotted minutes for a run-around.

It seems that work has allowed him to settle on those he wants to move forward with. He knows Chelsea will probably sign a few players in the summer and sell some, but this core group will be there. I am sure they would have liked another game this midweek to help build the momentum, but at the same time some rest and recovery will have aided those with a heavy workload after an intense period.

Lots of players have been used in different positions but 3-4-3 suits Chelsea best. That was the case under Thomas Tuchel and conceding once in their past three matches shows it is the same under Potter. They are better in a back three and Silva's absence has made them more aggressive in how they press as a defensive unit.

Chelsea have really good wing-backs who have brought a lot of success. Ben Chilwell and James are two of the best in the business and with the impending arrival of Malo Gusto from Lyon they have all the right components. Three centre-backs and two quality wing-backs give the squad a strong foundation.

We are seeing more of the Potter side we have been waiting for and what they will look like next season. If they have a good pre-season, it could be like 2015-16 when Chelsea finished 10th and won the league the following season. I still think the centre-forward piece is missing. They have Christopher Nkunku coming in the summer, but he is not a No 9 and they will want someone with a cutting edge. They need to create a number of chances to score a goal, as they showed against Dortmund, so they will be hoping to become more efficient.

The centre-forward piece is still missing. Christopher Nkunku is coming in the summer, but he is not a No 9

Everton visit tomorrow and will be a great test for Chelsea in front of a crowd buoyed up by the recent wins. Under Sean Dyche, Everton have proved a hard nut to crack and will provide a challenge for a side not clinical in front of goal. Three of Everton's back-four are central defenders and their midfield is very industrious. They have found some form with a win against Brentford and a draw at Nottingham Forest in their past two games.

It will be about scoring the first goal and Chelsea will have to be patient, which they have struggled with at times. Potter's Brighton would get through teams and knew how to be patient and he needs to instil that mentality. Chelsea have had good wins this month against two sides fighting for survival and another against Everton would be a boost going into the international break.

For Chelsea, it is about putting in the foundations to make a real charge in the future. It is what Arsenal did and they are reaping the rewards. Manchester United are doing likewise with their steady progress. Things do not happen overnight in the Premier League because it is the best in the world. Chelsea should try to finish as high as they can, but more than anything this is about a good run they can take into next season.

Sire Du Berlais leads day of upsets with Shishkin among beaten favourites

Unconsidered 33-1 shot lands third Festival victory with Stayers' Hurdle triumph

Greg Wood
Cheltenham

After two days at the Festival when the punters landed blow after blow, the bookmakers clawed their way back on an afternoon when every favourite was beaten. Envoi Allen's defeat of Shishkin, the even-money favourite, in the Ryanair Chase was the first big result for the ring but there was better yet to come 40 minutes later, as Sire Du Berlais, an unconsidered 33-1 chance, recorded the third Festival success of his career in the Grade One Stayers' Hurdle.

The famous green and gold colours of JP McManus have been a danger sign for the bookies at the Festival for 30 years or more, but it was the layers who were cheering as Mark Walsh brought Sire Du Berlais with a strong run at the final flight on the way to a three-quarter-length success. At 11, he was the oldest winner of the race since 1986, and though he could boast two Festival wins over course and distance, in 2019 and 2020, both had arrived in the Pertemps Final earlier on the card.

A return to that race had, in fact, been the initial plan for Gordon Elliott's gelding, but Sire Du Berlais failed to run in a qualifier and so ended up as a hopeful runner in the Grade One feature event instead.

"I thought he ran well at Navan the last day as he was giving a lot of weight away," McManus said after greeting his 71st Festival winner. "I thought he deserved to take his chance. I've not had too many 33-1 winners but old Creon [50-1 in the 2004 Pertemps Final] won at a big price and Kadoun [at the same price in the 2006 Pertemps] but this one, I'm afraid, went unbacked, but still we will just enjoy it just the same."

Dashel Drasher, another outsider at 40-1, was second past the post behind Sire Du Berlais, but relegated to third for causing interference at the final flight, leaving Elliott with a 1-2 after Teahupoo, the favourite, was promoted to second.

Envoi Allen, who took the Ryanair by two and three-quarter lengths from Shishkin earlier in the afternoon with Rachael Blackmore, seemed destined to be one of Elliott's stable stars himself in the early part of his career, when he ran up an 11-race winning streak that included Festival wins in the Bumper and Ballymore Novice Hurdle.

His owners moved their horses out of Elliott's yard before the 2021 Festival, however, when a photograph of the trainer sitting on a dead horse surfaced on the internet, and before yesterday's win he had failed to add to his Festival tally in two attempts.

In winning, he succeeded where Sir Gerhard, another runner in the same colours, had failed in Wednesday's Brown Advisory Novice Chase, by completing a full house of Grade One Festival wins in a bumper, over hurdles and over fences.

> **'This 33-1 winner went unbacked but we will enjoy it just the same'**
>
> **JP McManus**
> *Owner of Sire Du Berlais*

"I was hoping he would put his best foot forward and he duly did," said Henry de Bromhead, who took over as Envoi Allen's trainer. "We've tried to leave no stone unturned but whatever we are doing now seems to be working.

"I'm not sure what we do [next]. He stays three miles and the Gold Cup is the race. I'd say if [Cheveley Park's] A Plus Tard wasn't in it, he would have possibly run in it. We will see what we do next and just enjoy today."

Shishkin, the runner-up, was the best-backed horse of the day from a British stable, but Nicky Henderson's runner was jumping and hanging to his left from an early stage and did well even to make the frame after a serious blunder three from home. It was a second costly failure at the meeting in as many years, after he was pulled up behind Energumene after starting at 5-6 for last year's Champion Chase.

"He wasn't really travelling like you hoped he would have been, even early on, he just didn't look as though he was that happy about it," Henderson said. "He's done really well to finish where he has.

"It's odd for him to go left like that. He never looked comfortable, but look where he's finished and how he's finished. He made one bad mistake coming down the hill but got back into it, so he's determined if nothing else.

"We've got to sort out why he was going left-handed, as it's not like him to do that. He schooled on Monday and you've never seen a horse jump five fences straighter, quicker and more narrow. I've no excuses but it was unlike him to do that."



▲ *Rachael Blackmore celebrates her Ryanair victory aboard Envoi Allen*

The first setback for the punters on a difficult day was the defeat of Mighty Potter in the opening Turners Novice Chase, after Elliott's six-year-old had been backed down to 4-6. He could not cope with the finishing kick of Paul Nicholls's Stage Star, who stayed on to give Britain's champion trainer his first Festival winner since 2020, after a run of 53 losers at the meeting.

It was one of only two winners on the day for a British stable, as Ireland increased its tally to 15 at the meeting so far with five more victories, going into a final day when Irish trainers likely to field all seven favourites.



Outsider delivers a boost for the layers

Sire Du Berlais races through the field to win the Stayers' Hurdle and upset the odds

SEB DALY/SPORTSFILE/GETTY IMAGES

Analysis

Barry Glendenning *Cheltenham*



Nicholls looks to a resurgent future after Stage Star ends his three-year Festival drought

How the mighty had fallen. A 13-times British champion trainer who had saddled the first home in 46 Festival races including four Gold Cups, six Champion Chases and one Champion Hurdle before yesterday's card got under way, Paul Nicholls might have been forgiven for wondering if he would ever again welcome one of his charges back into the winners' enclosure during the annual March festivities at Cheltenham.

Given all his previous successes, masterminded in partnership with the help of household names such as Kauto Star, Denman, Frodon, Big Buck's and Flagship Uberalles, among others, by his own remarkable standards one of the best trainers in the business had endured a scarcely credible barren spell coming into the marketing confection and orgy of paddywhackery that was St Patrick's Thursday.

After 18 consecutive years of success at the Festival, Nicholls had somehow failed to send out a winner since 2020 and in Hermes Allen had already seen arguably his leading fancy for this year absolutely trounced in Wednesday's Ballymore Hurdle. It was a dispiriting and familiar story that summed up his frustrations with Festival life; seeing his horse go off as favourite only to get emphatically beaten in a race where Willie Mullins sent out the first three home.

Just 24 hours later in yesterday's opener, Stage Star finally ended the drought. Booted home after a fine frontrunning ride by Harry Cobden, he prompted a flurry of exultant fist-pumps and West Country whooping from the horse's clearly delighted whisperer.

Nicholls has masterminded victory in far more prestigious Festival races but could not have looked more pleased at having finally put one over on the combined forces of Irish raiders sent into battle by Mullins and Gordon Elliott after so long. The Turners Novice Chase may not be the stuff from which racing dreams are made, but Stage Star's win at least ended something of a nightmare for his relieved trainer as far as this meeting is concerned.

It's not that he's lost his touch. Far from it, in fact. Nicholls continues to send out winners at a prodigious rate, currently leads the jumps trainers' championship with winnings of almost £3m this season and before yesterday had



▲*Paul Nicholls says he lacks the resources of the top Irish trainers*

saddled 19 Group One winners in England and Ireland since his Cheltenham cold streak began, after Politologue's victory in the Queen Mother Champion Chase three years ago.

He has, however, regularly remarked on what he sees as the futility of trying to take on horses sent over from Ireland and on Tuesday correctly predicted that Hermes Allen might be bullied into submission by his Celtic rivals. "I'm not just going to waste bullets just to try to beat the Irish," he said last year. "If I think they are not good enough, I am going to go elsewhere with them and be a bit more selective and run in race we can win."

If Nicholls' comments smack of sour grapes, he insists they are not meant to and it is fair to say he is just being pragmatic. He has also stressed that, like an elite football manager, it will take time for him to rebuild his squad to a level where they can more regularly give the Irish plunderers a decent game.

"We've only 15 or 16 runners for the whole week and you have to make every one of them count," he said after Stage Star's win. "One has now so it is onwards and upwards. We've had a great time here over the years and it is hard to get those horses back but we are building them up again. We have heaps like him to come through and I think the next few years will be positive. It is hard to win here and we haven't the numbers the Irish trainers have."

With five of his bullets left to fire on the final day of this year's Festival, the odds suggest the most likely to hit the target is Bravemansgame in the Gold Cup. While those ahead of him in the betting will take some beating and there are doubts over whether or not he will get the trip, his trainer insists the two-time King George VI winner has come on in leaps and bounds over the past 12 months. When it comes to winning the Festival's most coveted trophy, those leaps and bounds are what it's all about.

Successful defence of Gold Cup is on for A Plus Tard

Greg Wood

When A Plus Tard and Rachael Blackmore charged 15 lengths clear of Minella Indo, the defending champion, in last year's Cheltenham Gold Cup, most of the 65,000 in attendance would surely have agreed it was one of the more memorable Festival moments of recent times.

But how soon we seem to forget. Twelve months and one race later, A Plus Tard is an 11-2 shot for the renewal of Cheltenham's showpiece event. Galopin Des Champs, whose dramatic exit at the last when well clear of the field in last year's Turners Novice Chase drew the biggest groan of the week from the stands, is a clear favourite to seize A Plus Tard's crown.

This is a Gold Cup that revolves around a big "if" and it concerns A Plus Tard, not Galopin Des Champs. If Henry de Bromhead's nine-year-old can reproduce anything close to his winning form in last year's race, then Galopin Des Champs, Bravemansgame and Noble Yeats will need to improve if they are to stop him completing the double.

His dismal run when favourite for the Betfair Chase in November, the first time in 15 starts over fences he had finished out of the frame, was the result of an infection picked up in transit to Haydock, while a freak knock to a joint immediately before the Savills Chase in December ruled him out of that race.

De Bromhead decided to keep him fresh for the Festival after that minor setback and he reports A Plus Tard has been showing all the right signs on the gallops. It is encouraging, too, that his string has been in excellent form this week, with a winner each afternoon.

Galopin Des Champs is clearly a rising talent, but, like Bravemansgame, he needs to prove himself on the climb to the line. There are no such doubts about **A Plus Tard (3.30)** and he is an excellent bet at the available odds to become the second dual Gold Cup winner since 2003.

Cheltenham 1.30 A Willie Mullins-trained Triumph winner is a near-certainty, according to the betting at least, as the Festival's leading trainer fields the only four runners shorter than 33-1. But which one? Lossiemouth is the No 1 on jockey bookings and did exceptionally well to be beaten just two-and-a-half lengths after a nightmare passage at Leopardstown last time. **Blood Destiny,** though, was still showing signs of inexperience on the way to an 18-length win at Fairyhouse in January and could improve to overhaul his stable companion.

Cheltenham 2.10 Filey Bay was a well-backed favourite for the Betfair Hurdle in February on his third run for Emmet Mullins and looked the likely winner on the run to the second-last. He could not quite reel in the winner after a mistake, but remains on a very fair mark.

Cheltenham 2.50 A Grade One event, but a poor one for fancied runners with one winner at a single-figure price in the past 10 years and **Letsbeclearaboutit** could sneak in under the radar at around 14-1. He needed four starts to get off the mark, by 22 lengths eased down, but his winning time was useful, he has progressed with every run and remains open to further improvement.

Cheltenham 4.10 Paul Nicholls broke a sequence of 53 straight losers at the Festival when Stage Star took the opener yesterday and **Secret Investor** could give him a quick follow-up, in a race he has won twice in the past decade. He was a Grade Two winner four runs ago in February 2021 and showed he retains much of that ability when finishing 13 lengths clear in his prep race at Kelso last month.

Today's big race

Boodles Gold Cup

3.30pm ITV1

Grade 1, Class 1, 3m 2f £351,688

1	1-5351	**Ahoy Senor** (48,C)	C Wymer & PJ Russell	11-10	L Russell	**D Fox**	84
2	/121-P	**A Plus Tard** (118,CD,BF)	Cheveley Park Stud	11-10	H De Bromhead	**R Blackmore**	87
3	114-11	**Bravemansgame** (81)	J Dance & B Drew	11-10	P Nicholls	**H Cobden**	89
4	1F2-31	**Conflated** (79)	Gigginstown House Stud	11-10	G Elliott	**D Russell**	85
5	7-2245	**Eldorado Allen** (34,C)	JP Romans & T Warner	11-10	J Tizzard	**B Powell**	82
6	1F1-11	**Galopin Des Champs** (41,C)	A Turley	11-10	WP Mullins	**P Townend**	**90**
7	1-21U1	**Hewick** (153)	TJ McDonald	11-10	JJ Hanlon	**J Gainford**	84
8	P22-P1	**Minella Indo** (75,CD)	B Maloney	11-10	H De Bromhead	**M Walsh**	86
9	1-P113	**Noble Yeats** (48)	R Waley-Cohen	11-10	E Mullins	**S Bowen**	87
10	134-14	**Protektorat** (48,C,D,BF)	A Ferguson & others	11-10	D Skelton	**H Skelton**	85
11	1255-2	**Royale Pagaille** (81,D)	S Ricci	11-10	V Wiliams	**C Deutsch**	83
12	2-1422	**Sounds Russian** (48,D)	Claxby & Co	11-10	R Jefferson	**S Quinlan**	84
13	111-22	**Stattler** (41,C)	RA Bartlett	11-10	WP Mullins	**PW Mullins**	88

Betting 7-4 Galopin Des Champs; 6-1 A Plus Tard; 15-2 Bavemansgame; 12-1 Noble Yeats; 14-1 Stattler; 16-1 Conflated; 18-1 Minella Indo, Protektorat; 25-1 Ahoy Senor; 40-1 Sounds Russian; 50-1 Hewick, Royale Pagaille; 150-1 Eldorado Allen

Formula One

Brother of man executed by Saudi Arabia accuses F1

Exclusive

Giles Richards

The brother of a man executed by the Saudi Arabian authorities last year has accused Formula One of being complicit in "heinous crimes" perpetrated by the state, which he insists is using F1 to sportswash an increasingly oppressive crackdown on dissent.

When F1 returns to the Jeddah circuit this weekend it will be just over a year since the Saudi state executed 81 men in one day, shortly before last year's grand prix. The United Nations high commissioner for human rights, Michelle Bachelet, reported the UN believed that of the 81 convicted of "terror offences" 41 were from the Shia minority who had taken part in anti-government protests, calling for greater political participation.

Mustafa al-Khayyat was one of the 81 men. Yesterday, his brother Yasser al-Khayyat wrote to the F1 chief executive, Stefano Domenicali, asserting that he had been executed for nothing more than taking part in pro-democracy protests and argued that F1's presence in the Kingdom had emboldened the authorities to act brutally and without compunction.

"They use the spectacle of this championship to distract from the murder of my brother and hundreds of others," he wrote. "The grand prix carrying on as normal, without mentioning the atrocities that have just been committed on that same soil, legitimises these heinous crimes.

"Silence is complicity. It is how the regime gets away with its atrocities and suppresses calls for democratic reforms. If you truly want Formula One to be an agent for change, rather than a tool to 'sportswash' Saudi abuses, end Formula One's silence."

Khayyat was moved to write to Domenicali after the Italian put his case to the Guardian that F1 could effect positive change in repressive regimes by exerting its "soft power" and engaging with the authorities.

"F1 is much stronger to do what we are doing because we are there, to be there to monitor what they are doing," Domenicali said. "I believe in keeping the pressure in the right way, what I have learned is if you want to be respected by people who think differently, the best way is not to shout. We don't have to create barriers."

> *'If you truly want F1 to be an agent for change … end F1's silence'*
>
> **Yasser al-Khayyat**

Farrell embraces family affair despite Ireland's grand slam target

Robert Kitson

Grand slam fever is intensifying by the hour in Ireland but pressure has never bothered Andy Farrell. The head coach has rarely sounded more serene as he named an ominously strong home side for tomorrow's Six Nations finale, with the return of Robbie Henshaw and Dan Sheehan and the availability of a fit Caelan Doris set to make England's task even tougher.

Farrell could even afford to joke about inviting his son Owen's children to Ireland's final training session to ensure they supported their grandfather's team at the Aviva Stadium. "We'll be trying to poach them into our captain's run and see if we can squeeze them to cheer for Ireland," said Farrell Sr, who has been encouraging his three-year-old grandson, Tommy, to pull on his green jersey this weekend. "I've told him to bring it so we'll see what he wears on Saturday."

At this precise moment, though, Farrell Sr has no desire to leave Dublin where, coincidentally, he now lives just down the road from England's team hotel. Despite having played for and coached the English national team, he confirmed he was in no hurry to relocate back across the Irish Sea and clearly believes his currently all-conquering Ireland squad has plenty more in them.



Robbie Henshaw will return for Ireland in tomorrow's match

"Why would we?" he replied, when asked if he and his wife, Coleen, might consider moving back in the near future. "We love it here. We're loving life and the rugby's pretty good as well." When he committed to moving to Dublin after his coaching tenure with England ended in late 2015, even he never imagined how well things would turn out both for himself and his family. "Whether you think it's a close flight or connected to the UK, it is still living abroad. It is a big move. We had to up sticks, the kids went away from their friends … that type of commitment from my family is something I never forget."

This weekend, though, is less about family reunions than completing a final bit of outstanding business. Ireland last won a grand slam in 2018 but they have never clinched one in Dublin, let alone on St Patrick's Day weekend. Farrell was in the England side swept away on a tide of emerald emotion at Croke Park in 2007 and recognises this as another of those occasions when an Irish loss is simply out of the question.

Having won multiple trophies during his rugby league days at Wigan, the former Great Britain captain also has an intuitive sense of the mindset his players will require. "What people think we're chasing is a trophy. We're not, we're chasing being the best version of ourselves when it matters most. We all know it matters but performing under that type of pressure is the next step for us."

Hence a week of preparation described as "pretty abrasive" by Farrell in the expectation of a more cohesive England performance than they managed against France last weekend. "It's not just any other game. We'd be stupid to think that. They'll have an emotional edge, obviously. There's no better tonic than getting back out there and putting a few things right. They're going to be formidable opponents for us."

Probing for weaknesses in this Ireland side, though, is increasingly tough. Even with Garry Ringrose unavailable, into the midfield comes a Lion in Henshaw. Jamison Gibson-Park has not started a Six Nations game previously this season but he is Ireland's usual starting No 9 while Ryan Baird, the replacement for the injured Iain Henderson, is a fast-rising talent in the second row.

With 12 Leinster players in the starting lineup, the levels of cohesion and familiarity are almost frightening. "Everyone talks about walking towards stuff and trying to be yourself but we don't want to be number two in anything," stressed Farrell. "We don't want to be second best. It's about embracing being the best we can be. If that's all that matters, then what have you got to lose? That's the pressure we put on ourselves."

▼ *Andy Farrell appears relaxed in the buildup to Ireland's title decider*
DAN SHERIDAN/INPHO/SHUTTERSTOCK



England are on right path despite defeats, says Borthwick

Luke McLaughlin

Steve Borthwick insists his England players are "learning fast" as they prepare for the Six Nations finale against grand slam-chasing Ireland in Dublin tomorrow.

England suffered a record 53-10 defeat against France at Twickenham last Saturday and are out of contention for the title as a result. A meeting with Andy Farrell's Ireland, the world's No 1-ranked side, at the Aviva Stadium promises to be even more demanding, but Borthwick says that the squad is on the right path.

"What I need to do is make sure players build relationships with each other, and understand what Test rugby is about," Borthwick said last night.

"I think this team is the right team for this game this weekend. What you're seeing is players that are experiencing a Six Nations tournament for the first time. I think they're learning fast. We fell short last week [and] we need to learn faster."

Borthwick has named a side featuring four changes from last weekend's heavy defeat. Owen Farrell replaces Marcus Smith to start at fly-half, aiming to deny his father, Andy, a clean sweep with Ireland, with Smith dropping to the replacements bench.

An injury to Ollie Lawrence also means a return for Sale's Manu Tuilagi, selected at No 12 and alongside Henry Slade in the centres for the first time since autumn 2021.

Henry Arundell of London Irish makes his first Test start on the wing, with Max Malins dropping out of the match-day 22. Regarded as the most exciting young attacking talent in the English game, Arundell has scored two international tries in six appearances, most recently in last month's Twickenham win against Italy.

Joe Marchant is named as a replacement to cover centre or wing, along with the second-row Nick Isiekwe, while the prop Dan Cole marks his 100th Test starting on the bench.

"I pick players because of the ability and strengths they have," Borthwick said of Arundell. "He has got some incredible strengths in his game. Yes, he's a young man, but we've all seen what capabilities he has. Ultimately we want him to get the ball in his hands, show and express what talent he has … He is a young man but my experience of him is that he's calm and composed."

Despite the emphatic superiority of the French forwards in Saturday's humbling defeat, Borthwick has made just one injury-enforced change to his starting pack: Northampton's David Ribbans comes into the second row for Ollie Chessum.

Borthwick revealed that Leicester's Chessum will have surgery on Monday on the ankle dislocation he sustained against France, and is expected to be sidelined for five to six months.

"The determination he has to be back on the field and back in an England shirt is quite immense," Borthwick said. "[We hope] he will have the opportunity to be fit in readiness for the Rugby World Cup."

Tomorrow's teams

Ireland H Keenan; M Hansen, R Henshaw, B Aki, J Lowe; J Sexton (c), J Gibson-Park; A Porter, D Sheehan, T Furlong, R Baird, J Ryan, P O'Mahony, J van der Flier, C Doris
Replacements R Herring, C Healy, T O'Toole, K Treadwell, J Conan, C Murray, R Byrne, J O'Brien.

England F Steward; A Watson, H Slade, M Tuilagi, H Arundell; O Farrell (c), J van Poortvliet; E Genge, J George, K Sinckler, M Itoje, D Ribbans, L Ludlam, J Willis, A Dombrandt
Replacements J Walker, M Vunipola, D Cole, N Isiekwe, B Curry, A Mitchell, M Smith, J Marchant

Rugby league

Faraimo runs in double to give Castleford comeback win

Castleford	14
Leeds	8

Aaron Bower
Mend-a-Hose Jungle

Bureta Faraimo scored two crucial tries to help Castleford Tigers secure a first victory of the new Super League season at the fifth attempt, and boost interim coach Andy Last's chances of securing the role full-time.

Last is in caretaker charge after the dismissal of Lee Radford, and he will have done his chances of being permanently appointed no harm here.

Leeds' preparations were stunted pre-match following speculation their hooker, Kruise Leeming, was about to leave the club just a month into the new season, with reports suggesting Leeming had requested a release. And that seemed to be a distraction initially for the Rhinos, who started much the slower of the two sides.

And after several near-misses in attack, Castleford eventually made the Rhinos pay for their sluggish start when slick handling to the right freed Faraimo, who crossed in the corner to nudge the hosts ahead.

The Rhinos responded well to that early setback, though. And they moved ahead for the first time when Aidan Sezer freed Cameron Smith, with Richie Myler supporting in expert fashion to give Rhyse Martin a simple conversion and put Leeds 6-4 ahead before Gareth Widdop levelled with a penalty.

However, the Rhinos would take a slender lead into the interval. They turned down the option to go for goal on two occasions in the final minutes of the first half but when a third opportunity presented itself, Martin obliged to make it 8-6.

You felt whoever scored first after half-time would have the ascendancy and just after the hour mark, Castleford struck when a set move from a scrum freed Faraimo, who finished well under pressure before Widdop converted to put Castleford ahead by four.

Widdop then added a penalty to open up a six-point lead. Leeds pushed for a try in the final moments that would have set up golden point extra-time but they spilled the ball in promising position on two separate occasions to ensure Castleford emerged victorious.

Castleford
Eden; Faraimo, Broadbent, Fonua, Qareqare; Widdop, Miller; Lawler, McShane, Massey, Milner, Mellor, Westerman
Interchange Edwards, Smith, Matagi, Watts
Tries Faraimo 2
Goals Widdop 3

Leeds
Myler; Olpherts, MacDonald, Newman, Fusitu'a; Austin, Sezer; Holroyd, O'Connor, Tetevano, McDonnell, Martin, Smith
Interchange Bentley, Sangare, Lisone, Roberts
Try Myler **Goals** Martin 2

Referee Aaron Moore

Vieira at risk of sack after Palace's winless 2023 reaches 12th game

Ed Aarons

The Crystal Palace chairman, Steve Parish, is seriously considering sacking Patrick Vieira as manager after a disastrous run that has left the club three points clear of the relegation zone.

Palace are yet to record a victory in 2023 in 12 matches and Wednesday's defeat at Brighton was the fourth successive match they have failed to score. It is understood Parish has been deeply unimpressed by performances in recent weeks and has begun sounding out potential replacements for Vieira, with Burnley's Vincent Kompany and Michael Carrick of Middlesbrough among those who could be targeted if he makes a change.

Vieira, who succeeded Roy Hodgson in 2021 and guided Palace to 12th in the Premier League and the FA Cup semi-final in his first season, is believed to have been frustrated by the lack of investment in the summer and January transfer windows and would point to his side having faced a run of fixtures against clubs in the top half.

Vieira is due to visit his former club Arsenal on Sunday in the final match before the international break and it remains to be seen whether he will be in place for the home fixture against Leicester on 1 April that begins a sequence of games against fellow relegation contenders.

Vieira was asked after Palace's first defeat against Brighton since 2019 whether he retained the faith of the Palace hierarchy and said: "You will have to ask those questions to them. I can't answer for them."



Manager under pressure at Palace

Patrick Vieira's side have failed to score in their last four matches
ANDREW BOYERS/ ACTION IMAGES/ REUTERS

Infantino still keen on Saudi deals in future

Continued *from back page*

an issue. There is a double standard here, which I really don't understand.

"There is no issue and no contract. There are discussions and, of course, we want to see how we can involve Saudi sponsors in women's football generally, how we can involve Saudi sponsors in men football, or we can involve Qatari sponsors in women's football and men's football, and other sponsors from all over the world."

Earlier, Infantino targeted broadcasters, some funded by taxpayers, who he said offered up to 100 times less for rights to the women's tournament. "Well, offer us 20% less, 50% less, but not 100% less," he said. "That's why we can't do it."

Infantino set a target of equal prize money for men and women at their next World Cups, in 2026 and 2027, respectively - a tough task when the 32 men's teams shared $440m at last year's World Cup in Qatar. "Women deserve much, much more than that and we are there to fight for them and with them," he said.

After being elected unopposed to another four-year term, Infantino told delegates a visit to a memorial for the victims of Rwanda's 1994 genocide had inspired him to carry on when his first campaign for the top job in football looked in trouble.

"I was pretty depressed, about to give up," he said, after hearing that African delegates would not support him. "I had already packed, and suddenly somebody came to see me and he gave me a ticket for the match of the final, because I had no ticket, and he told me: 'This is a ticket offered to you by President Paul Kagame.'

"Then I remembered my visit to the memorial. And I said: 'Who am I to give up?' What this country has suffered and how this country came back up is inspiring for the entire world, dear president [Kagame]. So I certainly couldn't give up because somebody was saying something. The next day I attended the match, I continued to campaign and I was elected president a few months later."

> *'Women deserve much, much more and we are there to fight for them'*
>
> **Gianni Infantino**
> *Fifa president*

Brother accuses F1 over Saudi Arabian execution *Page 39* →

Football In brief

Tottenham Hotspur

Conte insists talk of being sacked was a joke

Antonio Conte says he does not expect Tottenham to sack him before the end of the season. The 53-year-old is set to leave Spurs when his contract expires in the summer with no talks over extending his deal taking place. A poor start to March ended Tottenham's participation in the FA Cup and Champions League and increased the pressure on Conte, who suggested after the elimination against Milan that he could be sacked. But speaking ahead of tomorrow's trip to Southampton, the Italian said: "This was a provocation, you understand? About my future. A provocation, a joke, 'una battuta'. When you tell something, to joke. You asked me about the future and I said to you that you don't know what happens, because maybe the club can sack me. But I repeat, I don't think the club is thinking this." **PA Media**

Manchester City

Álvarez extends contract at Etihad

Julián Álvarez has signed a one-year extension with Manchester City, committing to the club until 2028. The 23-year-old forward who joined from River Plate, has scored 10 times in 33 appearances during his first season at the Etihad Stadium and also found the net four times for Argentina as they won the World Cup in December. "I have been really pleased with my first season here, but I have plenty more I can do," he said. **PA Media**

Liverpool

Youngster Bajcetic's breakthrough season ended by injury

Stefan Bajcetic's debut season is over because of an adductor injury. The 18-year-old midfielder missed Liverpool's 1-0 defeat by Real Madrid and yesterday wrote on Instagram: "It's very sad to say goodbye to this amazing season." The Spaniard has impressed in his 21 appearances across all competitions. **Reuters**

Southgate warns 'in four or five years we have to be really careful'

Continued *from back page*

continues. "It's not a concern for me in the next 18 months," he said, with a nod towards the remaining term of his contract. "But in the next four or five years' time we have got to be really careful."

On more than one Premier League weekend of late, only 28% of starting players have been eligible for England - the lowest ever number. More generally it has been about 32%.

"I can only speak about fact - 28% has happened on a couple of weekends in the last few weeks," said Southgate, who became England manager in 2016. "It has been around 32% but that's down from 35% when I took over and 38% in the years before, so the graph is clear. If nobody takes a position of trying to protect young English players and their chances then the numbers will continue in the same way."

According to studies, there is no relationship between the volume of Premier League minutes and national-team success. The key factor is having enough quality players that feature regularly at the highest level who are part of the 40 or so that a national team pick from each year.

England were ranked outside Fifa's top 20 between 1994 and 1996 when the league had about 65% English players. Since 2018, when England have been consistently in the top five, English player time has been about 34%. Southgate said there were more Brazilian and Portuguese players getting minutes in the Champions League than English ones - and many more French and Spanish.

"The concern would be the most recent trend in January: 55 deals and 44 that were either new foreign players coming in [to the Premier League] or two that were already here - Jorginho and [Albert] Sambi Lokonga, who moved inside," Southgate said. "Of the English deals, a couple were second- or third-choice goalkeepers and three were youth transfers - one was Romeo Beckham. So that's 80% of the deals coming in through January that were non-English. That impact of January has played out in the last couple of weeks.

"Also, somebody has to think about the 10,000 kids that are in our academies and whether or not there is a realistic chance of them having a career at the end. There is an ethical question, as well."

Southgate is well-versed on those, the cases of Toney and Walker the most pressing examples. With Toney, Southgate said there was no basis not to pick him given Toney was "playing for his club and there hasn't been a trial or any judgment".

He took a similar line on Walker, although he suggested it could change if charges were brought against the player. "As we sit here today there was no conclusive reason not to select him," Southgate said. "If that changes then we've got to review the situation. And he would understand that.

"It's a complicated situation. I've spoken at length with him. When you are an England international there is an even higher bar on how you conduct yourself. I don't think we are taking those decisions lightly."

England squad: J Pickford, N Pope, A Ramsdale; B Chilwell, E Dier, M Guéhi, R James, H Maguire, L Shaw, J Stones, K Trippier, K Walker; J Bellingham, C Gallagher, J Henderson, J Maddison, M Mount, K Phillips, D Rice; P Foden, J Grealish; H Kane, M Rashford, B Saka, I Toney

Sporting score stunning leveller



Gabriel watches on as Pedro Gonçalves fires a long-range effort into the Arsenal net
EDDIE KEOGH/UEFA/GETTY IMAGES

Sporting shock Arsenal after Gonçalves wonder strike sets up shootout win

Arsenal	**1**
Xhaka 19	
Sporting Lisbon	**1**
Gonçalves 62	

aet. 3-3 on agg; Sporting win 5-3 on pens

Nick Ames
Emirates Stadium

This time the late drama did not go Arsenal's way. They were below par for much of this match and were ultimately knocked out of the Europa League on penalties, Nuno Santos ramming in Sporting's winner to prompt ecstatic celebrations after Gabriel Martinelli had seen the previous spot kick saved. Pedro Gonçalves had earlier equalised Granit Xhaka's opener with a remarkable 50-yard strike; the Portuguese side earned their route to the last eight and Mikel Arteta's players will, by way of consolation, feel free to focus on their title push.

Much of the talk in advance had been of Arteta's rebranding of substitutes as "impacters". There was certainly plenty in reserve here if he wished to use it but the starting lineup was, as ever, not too far off full fat. Even if Bukayo Saka was given a rare rest there was the sight of Gabriel Jesus, eased back in at Fulham on Sunday, being returned to the XI; Martinelli, Xhaka and four of the preferred back five were also deployed, Ben White the only regular defender stood down.

White was called upon to make an impact sooner than he would have expected. His deputy, the luckless Takehiro Tomiyasu, was outdone by a sumptuous turn from Francisco Trincão in the sixth minute and went down shortly afterwards. The cause was injury rather than shame: the right-back appeared to have overstretched in the process of being outwitted and his night was over as soon as it had begun.

Trincão, having switched across from the left flank, cut inside and bent a shot narrowly wide of Aaron Ramsdale's right post; Marcus Edwards, a scorer here for Vitória Guimarães in 2019, flitted into threatening pockets.

But Arsenal knew from the first leg that Sporting, whose defence missed the suspended captain Sebastián Coates, were porous. Jesus got enough on Reiss Nelson's cross to force a messy intervention from the keeper Antonio Adán. It offered clear encouragement and the breakthrough followed swiftly.

The chance arose when Jorginho, from deep, wafted a perfectly weighted through ball along the inside-left channel to Martinelli. Adán was able to block the Brazilian's low effort with a foot but Xhaka, following up, made light of the miss with a finish of power and control. It was Xhaka's first goal since October.

Another defensive injury, this time to William Saliba, immediately removed some of the gloss although he did not look overly dismayed upon leaving the pitch in what appeared a precaution. Rob Holding, his replacement, soon made a timely block from Edwards but Arsenal were now in control. A second goal would probably kill the tie and Jesus almost provided it, twisting into space and forcing a sharp save from Adán.

Sporting had all but evaporated as an attacking force but their right-sided centre-back, Jeremiah St Juste, offered a warning shot four minutes before half-time with a 50-yard burst into space that was let down by a wild finish. Manuel Ugarte was then inches wide on the whistle and Arteta will have hoped for a shift in gear.

Leandro Trossard took the place of Jesus, who had looked sharp enough, for the second half in what appeared a pre-planned switch. Almost immediately there was concern on Arsenal faces when Gabriel Magalhães stayed down after challenging Paulinho, followed by relief that he did not go the same way as Saliba.

Holding was again alert to deny Paulinho; all too often, the visitors were finding spaces behind Arsenal's midfield. By the hour Arsenal had offered nothing new and it felt they had slept on a chance to make the latter stages easier for themselves.

They were given the most extraordinary wake-up call. Jorginho and Xhaka overplayed in midfield but there was still no reason to believe Gonçalves, taking the ball six yards inside Arsenal's half, could pose significant danger. What followed was a strike of remarkable vision that caught Ramsdale too far off his line and sailed into the goal, sending the away contingent into raptures.

Paulinho then headed a corner just over; Arteta, duly stung, called Saka and Thomas Partey from his bench. Edwards, denied by Ramsdale's face, missed a glorious chance and Arsenal had to handle an extended shift. They spurned a gift from Dário Essugo, whose backpass sent Trossard through only for Adán to divert onto a post. In a hectic finale Adán saved stunningly from Gabriel before the same player had a header cleared. Then Ugarte received his second booking for a foul on Saka, but Sporting made it through to penalties.



Granit Xhaka celebrates opening the scoring for Arsenal

Quarter-final draw

The quarter-final draws for the Champions League, Europa League and Europa Conference League take place today from 11am. The potential semi-final ties will also be decided at Uefa HQ in Nyon, Switzerland. Follow the draws as they happen on www.theguardian.com/sport

Arsenal
4-3-3
Ramsdale; Tomiyasu (White 9), Saliba (Holding● 21), Gabriel, Zinchenko; Vieira● (Ødegaard 101), Jorginho (Partey 65), Xhaka●; Nelson (Saka 65), Jesus (Trossard ht), Martinelli

Sporting
3-4-3
Adán; St Juste, Diomande●, Inácio; Esgaio, Ugarte●, Gonçalves (Essugo 94), Reis (Santos 94); Edwards (Talongo 119), Paulinho (Chermiti 90), Trincão (Arthur 105)

Referee Antonio Mateu Lahoz (Sp)

Rashford rifles in latest thunderbolt to drain Betis belief

Real Betis 0

Manchester United 1
Rashford 55

Manchester United win 5-1 on agg

Sid Lowe
Estadio Benito Villamarín

Two minutes before 8pm local time, 55 minutes into this game, the Benito Villamarín rose to its feet and began to applaud, Real Betis's fans then breaking into song of praise for their players. They had not scored; Manchester United had, Marcus Rashford sending an astonishing shot spearing past Rui Silva to make him the Europa League's top scorer and, they knew, take Manchester United through, 1-0 up on the night, 5-1 on aggregate. But they had always suspected that would happen and although there was half an hour left now it was over, so they stood, recognition and resignation in their reaction.

"Once you have scored the first goal the game is gone for them. They don't have the belief any more and you have to manage that," Erik ten Hag said. "I am very pleased." Ultimately, his United team had eased into the quarter-finals, where they will surely be favourites. They also escaped the greatest risk they had faced, Casemiro and Bruno Fernandes avoiding suspensions.

Superiority told. The surprise, perhaps, that there was only one goal: once Rashford provided it, Harry Maguire headed over, Wout Weghorst shot at Silva and Jadon Sancho went clean through, an offside flag rescuing him from a wasted chance, as United racked up 17 shots. Betis, meanwhile, had taken 15, feeling they might be in this until that shot took their hopes with it. They had fallen but that, Manuel Pellegrini had already insisted, would not mean they had failed - and the fans felt the same. "In the end it's quality; they're superior," the coach conceded.

Betis had competed, for 55 minutes at least - about as long as they had lasted at Old Trafford. "Hope goes hand in hand with realism," Pellegrini had said.

Betis had never overcome more than a one-goal deficit in Europe, let alone three, and still less against Manchester United, "a Champions League team in the Europa League". There is, he claimed, a tenfold difference in their budgets but that did not mean there would be no belief. Fans arrived early, gathered singing in the sunshine, orange blossom announcing spring. They were determined to try; above all, they came to enjoy this.

They had to score three but, as Pellegrini said, they did not have to get them all in five minutes. If one came early enough, who knows? Ultimately, none did, but for a while the prospect of them making an occasion if not an actual comeback of this was real. Although Facundo Pellistri escaped just 40 seconds into an impressive first United start, it was Betis who applied pressure early, Ayoze Pérez taking aim inside four minutes. That was blocked by Casemiro, putting out fires.

Betis could have had the lead seven minutes in. Weghorst dived for a header he only just failed to reach after Casemiro nodded on a corner and then suddenly Juanmi was away at the other end, released by Pérez. Clean through, his shot beat David de Gea but ran past a post. "Yes, we can!" the chant ran, the optimism contagious as, almost immediately, Betis nearly got through the same space between Maguire and Aaron Wan-Bissaka.

Momentum was building. From 20 yards Joaquín, who was already a year into his career when Pellistri was born in 2001, curled a wonderful shot off the post. Joaquín is 41, but for a moment he was 19 again, lovely feet then taking him past Casemiro. The final pass did not quite come off then; seconds later it did, slipping in Juanmi again. Lisandro Martínez had to scramble away. Again Betis got through, Aitor Ruibal's angled pass setting Juanmi free only for De Gea to save.

United had been under pressure, but it was not permanent. Casemiro and Fernandes took responsibility and control, the former demonstrating his capacity to time and weigh a pass. Pellistri was lively, always willing to run. And Rashford remained the man they feared most. Fernandes struck over, then saw a shot charged down by Edgar González, and just before half-time Pellistri hit a post with Weghorst, diving to reach it, unable to force the ball over the line.

As the second half began, Rashford could not take a chance made for him by Pellistri and Casemiro. The Uruguayan drew everyone towards him and found the Brazilian, who dropped it off for Rashford, but Silva saved. A moment later, Rashford sliced a wild shot high. Between those two efforts, De Gea saved a Pérez header.

That was Betis's 12th attempt, United had nine and more followed. It had been frantic and fun and just when you were wondering how this was still 0-0, it was not. Just when you were wondering how Rashford had not scored from the previous two, he did so from a place far less likely. Twenty-five yards out, no warning except his very presence, a flash of his boot and the ball was flying into the corner, taking United through and Betis's hope with it.

Real Betis	Manchester United
4-2-3-1 Silva; Sabaly, Pezzella, González, Abner (Miranda 26); Rodríguez (Guardado 66), Carvalho; Ruibal (Iglesias 59), Joaquín (Canales 59), Juanmi; A Pérez (Willian José 59)	**4-2-3-1** De Gea; Wan-Bissaka (Dalot 75), Maguire, Martínez (Lindelöf 75), Malacia; Casemiro, Fred (Sabitzer 60); Pellistri, Fernandes (Elanga 68), Rashford (Sancho 60); Weghorst

Referee Srdjan Jovanovic (Ser) **Attendance** 54,643



▼ *Marcus Rashford lashes in Manchester United's winner against Real Betis*
PAUL CURRIE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Bowen sinks Cypriot side
West Ham eased into the quarter-finals of the Europa Conference League with a 4-0 win on the night - 6-0 on aggregate - against AEK Larnaca. Jarrod Bowen (right) struck twice after Gianluca Scamacca's opener, with the youngster Divin Mubama adding the fourth.



MATTHEW CHILDS/ACTION IMAGES/REUTERS

Results

Football

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE
Round of 16: Second leg

Arsenal Xhaka 19 *(agg 3-3; score at 90min)*	(1) **1**	**Sporting** Goncalves 62	(0) **1**
Fenerbache Valencia 41pen	(1) **1**	**Sevilla** *(agg 1-2)*	(0) **0**
Ferencvaros *(agg 0-4)*	(0) **0**	**Bayer Leverkusen** Diaby 3 Adli 78	(1) **2**
Feyenoord Giménez 9 Kokcu 24 38pen Idrissi 49 60 Jahanbakhsh 64 Danilo 66	(3) **7**	**Shakhtar Donetsk** Kelsy 87 *(agg 8-2)*	(0) **1**
Freiburg *(agg 0-3)*	(0) **0**	**Juventus** Vlahovic 45pen Chiesa 90	(1) **2**
Real Betis *(agg 1-5)*	(0) **0**	**Manchester Utd** Rashford 55	(0) **1**
Real Sociedad *(agg 0-2)*	(0) **L**	**Roma**	(0) **L**
Union St-Gilloise Teuma 18 Lazare Amani 63 Lapoussin 90	(1) **3**	**Union Berlin** *(agg 6-3)*	(0) **0**

UEFA CONFERENCE LEAGUE
Round of 16: Second leg

AZ Alkmaar Karlsson 28 Pavlidis 62	(1) **2**	**Lazio** Anderson 21 *(agg 4-2)*	(1) **1**
Djugårdens *(agg 0-5)*	(0) **0**	**Lech Poznan** Marchwinski 77 Kvekveskiri 90 Skoras 90	(0) **3**
Nice Laborde 30 Moffi 53 Brahimi 79	(1) **3**	**Sheriff Tiraspol** Tapsoba 54 *(agg 4-1)*	(0) **1**
Sivasspor Yesilyurt 35 *(agg 1-5)*	(1) **1**	**Fiorentina** Cabral 44 Milenkovic 62 Goutas 78og Castrovilli 89	(1) **4**
Slovan Bratislava Abubakari 11 Kucka 17 *(agg 4-4; aet; Basel won 4-1 on pens)*	(2) **2**	**Basel** Calafiori 53 Amdouni 90	(0) **2**
Villarreal *(agg 1-2)*	(0) **0**	**Anderlecht** Slimani 73	(0) **1**
West Ham Scamacca 21 Bowen 47 49 Mubama 65	(1) **4**	**AEK Larnaca** *(agg 6-0)*	(0) **0**

LOWLAND LEAGUE
Rangers B P Caledonian Braves P

AIRTRICITY IRISH PREMIER DIVISION
Drogheda 0 Dundalk 1

Rugby league

BETFRED SUPER LEAGUE
Castleford 14 Leeds 8

Cricket

FIRST ONE-DAY INTERNATIONAL
East London South Africa v West Indies. Match abandoned, rain.

Golf

SDC CHAMPIONSHIP (St Francis, South Africa)
Leading first-round scores (GB/Ire unless stated)
67 D Ravetto (Fr); K Krogh Johannessen (Nr). **68** C Syme. **69** J Brun (Fr); S Cronje (SA); N Bachem (Ger) J Luiten (Neth); M Leth Simonsen (Den). **70** M Baldwin; A Venter (SA); S Valimaki (Fin); B Follett-Smith (Zim); D Brown; L Albertse (SA) A Levy (Fr). **71** J Kamte (SA); D Law; D Fichardt (SA); R Sciot-Siegrist (Fr); J Harding (SA); J Catlin (US); Z Lombard (SA); M Gradecki (Pol); R Fisher; JC Ritchie (SA); R Korb (SA); L de Jager (SA); T Clements.

VALSPAR CHAMPIONSHIP (Palm Harbour, Florida)
Leading first-round scores (US unless stated)
66 R Brehm; S Jäger (Ger). **67** J Spieth; L Glover; M McNealy. **68** A Smalley; P Kizzire. **69** A Hadwin (Can); S Burns; J Thomas; B Griffin; D Riley; MJ Daffue (SA). **70** P Rodgers; JT Poston; E van Rooyen (SA); W Gordon; V Perez (Fr); A Bhatia. **71** Kim S-h (Kor); T Moore; K Kraft; J Dufner; R Werenski; G Woodland; G Higgo (SA); W Simpson; H Lebioda; J Van Der Laan; V Norrman (Swe); T Werbylo.

WOMEN'S ARAMCO TEAM SERIES (Laguna, Singapore)
Leading first-round scores (GB/Ire unless stated)
67 N Garcia (SA). **68** P Bouchard (Fr); K Spilkova (Cz); L Grant (Swe); C Wolf (Aut); E Givens. **69** T Cheenglab (Tha); S Schober (Aut); D Kang (US); N Broch Estrup (Den); A Sauzon (Fr); E Young. **70** A Hewson; A van Dam (Neth); K Telfer (SA); E Spitz (Aut); S Witt (Ger); C Williams; E Grechi (Fr); B Law. **71** N Iturrioz (Sp); C Gainer; D Dagar (Ind); M De Roey (Bel); A Boulden; H Burke; C Noja (Ger). **72** L Ko (NZ); A Pelaez (Sp); M Skarpnord (Nor); M Thomson; J Gustavsson (Swe); O Cowan (Ger); E Arvidsson (Swe).

Tennis

BNP PARIBAS OPEN (Indian Wells, California)
Men: Singles: Quarter-finals: D Medvedev (Rus) bt A Davidovich Fokina (Sp) 6-3 7-5; **F Tiafoe** (US) bt C Norrie (GB) 6-4 6-4.
Doubles: Quarter-finals: J Sock & J Isner (US) bt F Fognini & S Bolelli (It) 6-2 6-4; **M Ebden & R Bopanna** (Aus/Ind) bt F Auger-Aliassime & D Shapovalov (Can) 6-4 7-5.

Women: Singles: Quarter-finals: M Sakkari (Gre) bt P Kvitova (Svk) 4-6 7-5 6-1; **A Sabalenka** (Blr) bt C Gauff (US) 6-4 6-0; **E Rybakina** (Kaz) bt K Muchova (Cz) 7-6 (7-4) 2-6 6-4.
Doubles: Quarter-finals: B Haddad Maia & L Siegemund (Br/Ger) w/o J Teichmann & B Bencic (Swi); **E Shibahara & S Aoyama** (Jpn) bt M Linette & C McNally (Pol/US) 6-4 3-6 10-8; **B Krejcikova & K Siniakova** (Cz) bt S Sanders & E Mertens (Aus/Bel) 6-3 6-3.

Fixtures

Football
Premier League
Nottingham Forest v Newcastle (8pm)
Sky Bet League One
Sheffield Wed v Bolton (7.45pm)
Cinch Scottish Chanpionship
Arbroath v Morton (7.45pm)
Cricket
Second Test (second day of five)
New Zealand v Sri Lanka, Wellington (10pm)
First one-day international
India v Australia, Wankhede (8am)
Rugby league
Betfred Super League
Huddersfield v Wigan (7.45pm); St Helens v Hull FC (8pm); Warrington v Leigh (8pm)

The Guardian
Friday 17 March 2023

Sport

Danger zone
Vieira under pressure at Palace after winless run



Page 41 →

Staying power
Long shot Sire Du Berlais gallops to glory at Cheltenham



Page 38 →

Shootout misery for Martinelli

Arsenal	Sporting Lisbon
1	1

aet. 3-3 on agg. Sporting win 5-3 on pens



Gabriel Martinelli after missing Arsenal's fourth penalty, setting up Sporting to win the shootout
Match report *Page 42* →

JOHN SIBLEY/ACTION IMAGES/REUTERS

Southgate fears shrunken talent pool will hurt successor

David Hytner

Gareth Southgate fears his successors as England manager will face a selection crisis if the number of Premier League players eligible for the national team continues to diminish.

Southgate's immediate concern is the opening Euro 2024 qualifying fixtures against Italy in Naples next Thursday and Ukraine at Wembley three days later. He has recalled Ivan Toney, despite the in-form striker facing a lengthy ban after accepting multiple charges of breaching the Football Association's betting rules.

The manager has also brought back Reece James, Ben Chilwell and Marc Guéhi and has stood by Kyle Walker, who is under police investigation after allegedly exposing himself in a bar. There is no room in the 25-man group for Trent Alexander-Arnold, Ben White, Conor Coady and Callum Wilson, while it was stressed that Raheem Sterling was not fit.

Southgate is confident that England have a chance to win the European Championship, suggesting it was a part of his motivation for staying on in the job after the disappointment of the World Cup quarter-final loss to France last December. But when he looked further ahead in terms of the picture around the setup his mood darkened.

Southgate said he was short on depth in certain positions, namely specialist left-backs and defensive midfielders. He noted there were only "four left-footed left-backs playing in the Premier League" who were eligible for England, meaning he would have to "start looking in the Championship". Kalvin Phillips, the midfield pivot, has remained in the squad despite having not started a league game for Manchester City.

Southgate said it was irrefutable that the number of English players in the league was "deteriorating rapidly" and he is worried about the future if the trend 41 →



▲ *Gareth Southgate said the number of English players is 'deteriorating'*

Sponsorship plan scrapped
Fifa admits defeat over Saudi Women's World Cup deal

Sean Ingle

Fifa has admitted defeat over plans to make Visit Saudi a major sponsor of this year's Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand after a huge backlash from organisers and players.

At the Fifa congress in Kigali, Rwanda, Gianni Infantino said: "I can clarify that there were discussions with Visit Saudi. At the end this discussion didn't lead into a contract. How do you say it? It was a storm in a water glass. A storm in a teacup."



Gianni Infantino has defended Fifa's sponsorship decisions

Despite the Fifa president's attempts to make light of the situation, this is a significant victory for organisers, who were left blindsided in January by reports suggesting a deal was close, given the Saudi state's appalling human rights record, and had put significant public pressure on Fifa to change course.

Several players spoke out, including Arsenal's Netherlands striker Vivianne Miedema, who told Fifa it should be "deeply ashamed" for even considering such a deal. However, Infantino, who announced a $150m (£124m) prize fund for this year's Women's World Cup - a 300% rise from 2019 - said he didn't see anything wrong with taking sponsorship from countries such as Saudi Arabia.

"Fifa is an organisation of 211 countries," he said. "For us they are all the same. There wouldn't be anything bad in making sponsorships from Saudi Arabia, China, United States of America, Brazil or India as far as we are concerned."

Infantino also pointed out that while there had been a backlash to the mooted Visit Saudi deal, very little was being said about the $1.5bn worth of trade between Australia and Saudi Arabia every year. "This doesn't seem to be a problem," he said. "But between a global organisation like Fifa and Visit Saudi this would have been 41 →

Cancer drugs make me realise what I'll tolerate to survive *Hilary Osborne, page 3*
TikTok's pushy sales model is fuelling debt *Iona Bain, page 4*
Dorothy Iannone, an artist inspired by love in all its forms *Obituaries, page 6*
G2 Daily pullout life & arts section *Inside*

The Guardian Friday 17 March 2023

Journal

Opinion and ideas

At last, a budget for parents - but as always there's a catch

Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett



The chancellor's budget announcement represents the largest expansion of free childcare England has ever seen, and from a Tory government. I can't believe I actually typed that sentence. Extending the 30 free childcare hours to children aged between nine months and two years will cost £4bn and will, the chancellor claims, cut families' childcare costs by 60%. Combined with the intention to increase the availability of wraparound care for parents of school-age children, it could be the news that many campaigners and parents have been waiting for.

When you live in the UK and you start thinking about having a child, or are perhaps already pregnant with one, there is, I think, a moment when you look into what the childcare offer is and realise, with a sinking heart, that between the ages of nine months and three years old, you're basically on your own. However, it's often necessary to work full-time, as most modern households require two incomes. So unless you have family support, you're going to need to pay someone if you want to return to the workplace. And with the second-most expensive childcare system in the world and nursery waiting lists that can last years (one couple I know just paid £14,000 upfront for a child that has yet to be conceived - but don't worry, they refund you if you don't get pregnant): good luck!

This childcare gap has never made any sense politically, socially or economically. I can remember thinking that I might have to simply give up my job, as many women do. That there has now been political recognition of the unfairness of this, and the burden that it places on mothers, is no small thing. And it is usually mothers, as we all know. The financial pressures on families - of which my colleague Lucy Pasha-Robinson wrote starkly last week - won't end, but they will be eased significantly in some cases.

So there is something to celebrate, certainly. Just seeing childcare on the political agenda again feels like a sea change, and it's OK for parents to feel cautiously optimistic, even if they are frustrated about how long the phased introduction of the free hours will take, because parents are desperate and struggling now. Though the measures will not be fully implemented until 2025, it seems that some families, like mine, with a one-year-old, will benefit from 15 hours from next spring. Not that it's actually 15 hours, just as it isn't actually 30 hours. Inexplicably, the government continues to assume that school holidays shouldn't count, despite the fact that most working parents don't get those off, so it actually provides 30 hours of free childcare a week for only 38 weeks of the year. When you divide the total number of free hours by the number of weeks in the year, it isn't quite the offer it initially seems.

2

At last, a budget for parents - but as always there's a catch

Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett

← *Continued from front*

So it's important to retain perspective. England has not suddenly become Finland, with its enviable state-subsidised daycare system and its willingness to fund parents who want to stay at home to care for their children. Credit where it's due, though. Joeli Brearley of Pregnant Then Screwed has been fighting for years for better childcare on behalf of British parents, and without her efforts, it is unlikely anything would have changed. She's not resting on her laurels, though. "This is a significant moment for childcare," she tells me. "After years of campaigning by parents and groups like ours, childcare is now top of the agenda for every political party - that is absolutely a moment worth celebrating. However, there are a number of serious issues with the plan."

Reservations include the fact that the funding paid to childcare providers for the "free" hours is too low, which means more nurseries could close their doors - a disaster in the making, considering there will inevitably be an explosion in demand. As Sam Freedman, who co-authored the report Delivering a Childcare Guarantee for the Institute for Public Policy Research thinktank, explained: "Nurseries subsidise the too-low free hourly rate by charging more for one- and two-year-olds (thus such high prices). If one- and two-year-olds also get free hours then they can't cross-subsidise. You risk a major supply problem." Research from the Confederation of British Industry estimates that fully funding the existing schemes for three- to four-year-olds and expanding the scheme to one- and two-year-olds would cost £8.9bn.

The big question, as Freedman noted, is where these places will come from in a market that is so dysfunctional. Especially when, I suspect, we may see a mini-baby boom as parents who were wondering how they could ever afford another baby realise that it might just about be doable now.

For those less well off and single parents, the changes to the amount of childcare support universal credit claimants receive - and the fact it will be paid upfront and not in arrears - are welcome developments. That the free offer only applies to households in which all the adults are working, though, might mean that some children who would really benefit developmentally will miss out. The debate around childcare still largely focuses on the difference it can make to parents in terms of their wellbeing and finances, which is important; but the social and educational benefits to children are often left unarticulated. In fact, childcare should be a children's rights issue and we should not be denying those children access to the education system. The proposed ratio relaxation, which increases the number of two-year-olds in England that each adult can look after in a childcare setting from 1:4 to 1:5 (as is the case in Scotland), is unlikely to help children either.

"Is it all fur coat and no knickers? In some ways, yes," Brearley says. "Most of what was laid out in the chancellor's budget is to be implemented after the general election, so we don't know who will be in charge of delivering it." It's a carrot, in other words. One that looks tasty, and shows that politicians are finally waking up to the fact that they desperately need the millennial vote. "What is so important is that we have changed the conversation. The Conservative party now acknowledges that childcare is key infrastructure for the economy, and extending subsidised schemes to all children from nine months old is massive. Labour will be forced to beat this policy, and so the only way is up."

Though I'm pleased, and the free hours will probably benefit me, the Tories will never get my vote. But then, as a friend said, they wouldn't get my vote even if Jacob Rees-Mogg offered me the free use of his personal nanny. On balance, however, I think I'd rather entrust my baby to the state-funded children's centre. One of the few that are left after the Conservative party closed them down. Could we possibly have them back, by the way?

The Guardian
Founded 1821 Independently owned by the Scott Trust *№ 54,920*
'Comment is free… but facts are sacred' CP Scott

Childcare

Early learning should be about more than getting parents back into work

On hearing that Jeremy Hunt plans to extend the offer of 30 free childcare hours to children under three, many parents will have breathed a collective sigh of relief. The prominence of childcare in his budget is evidence of how far opinion has shifted. Though a vital part of the economy, childcare has long been treated as a domestic issue. Parents have been expected to conjure up an additional salary for the luxury of being able to go to work. Provision is patchy, complicated and ruinously expensive.

Mr Hunt's recognition of these facts was a welcome change in tone. But his offer, which would only come into full effect after the next election, treats childcare as a means to a single end: getting parents into work. Childcare isn't just an economic growth issue. Early years education plays a crucial role in targeting inequalities and closing attainment gaps. For this reason, quality matters as much as availability. Mr Hunt, like his predecessors, sees childcare primarily as a labour market tool. The risk is that simply expanding the number of free hours without reforming the childcare system will drive down quality. Moreover, limiting free hours to families where both parents work will cut out those who could also benefit, such as parents who are looking for jobs.

The government has made £4.1bn available to fund this expansion and raise the hourly rate of childcare workers. This money, which will also cover after-school clubs, is unlikely to stretch far enough. The sector has seen its funding cut by 13% in real terms since 2017, and already struggles to provide existing free hours for three- and four-year-olds. Research obtained via freedom of information requests shows the subsidy for existing free hours is only two-thirds of what the government estimates is needed. The answer, for many nurseries, has been to cross-subsidise free places by charging parents extortionate fees for younger children. If those children are also entitled to free hours, nurseries won't be able to do this, so those that were already struggling may decide to increase the price of unfunded hours or other fees.

Worse, some may close. Thousands of nurseries have already shut. Mr Hunt has pledged to boost the number of nursery places, but all that has been announced is a pilot giving childminders a £600 incentive payment. In a recent interview, he said it was not up to government to calculate the number of nurseries needed because "we're not Stalinist Russia". But without careful planning, particularly for how to retain staff, the government may end up pouring money into a system where for-profit providers cream off additional funding and squeeze worker wages. Under Mr Hunt's proposals, the hourly rate for those who work with three- and four-year-olds will only increase in line with inflation. In an industry where the average salary is about £15,000, this is small change.

Doubling the number of free hours appears to create a new arm of the welfare state. But rather than a Beveridgean moment, where high quality and affordable childcare is made universally available, the result of Mr Hunt's current proposals will be a patchy system more akin to the piecemeal reforms that predated the welfare state. Without a detailed workforce plan and adequate funding to ensure good outcomes for children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, these reforms will at best be a missed opportunity - and could even make things worse.

English devolution

The budget's 'trailblazer' deals are an important first step in the right direction

Across great swathes of English local government, three lost years of levelling up have served principally to foster a growing sense of frustration, resentment and disappointment. The value of piecemeal pots of money made available by Westminster has been dwarfed by the impact of long-term austerity on council finances. Inflation has diminished their worth still further and the cost of living crisis has disproportionately struck areas that levelling up was intended to help.

But what has perhaps grated most with local leaders is the "begging-bowl culture" condemned by the Conservative West Midlands mayor, Andy Street; a bidding process requiring areas to spend inordinate sums fighting each other for access to limited Westminster largesse. Though purportedly designed to empower less well-off regions, the levelling up programme has reinforced the supplicant status of communities in thrall to politicised decision-making in London.

The "trailblazer" devolution agreements with Greater Manchester and the West Midlands, announced on Wednesday by the chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, amount to a belated and welcome admission that Whitehall does not always know best. In fact, when it comes to dealing with the legacy of deindustrialisation in much of the country, its record has been truly dismal. A top-down, over-centralised political culture has created a much greater level of regional inequality than most other large, wealthy nations. Nor should this come as any surprise. It is inconceivable, for example, that the disgraceful underdevelopment of the north's railway infrastructure would have been permitted, if northern leaders had possessed the powers to do something about it.

In handing Mr Street and Andy Burnham, the Greater Manchester mayor, discretionary control over multi-year financial settlements focused on transport, housing and skills, the chancellor has acknowledged that the way England does its politics needs to change. The new autonomy will give both city-regions the chance to develop joined-up, bespoke strategies for growth, based on local priorities and insulated from politicking at the national level. Nascent projects, such as Mr Burnham's "Atom Valley" plans for a hi-tech manufacturing hub in Rochdale and Oldham, will have a greater chance of succeeding as a result.

The two deals are only a first small step in the right direction. A lack of revenue-raising powers compared to equivalent regions in countries such as Germany means the combined authorities will be less able to effectively roll the pitch to attract international investment. If England's regions are to really take charge of their own destiny, full-fat fiscal devolution will be necessary. More also needs to be done to develop new forms of scrutiny and accountability, not just in Westminster but at the regional level. And sooner rather than later, the privileges accorded to Greater Manchester and the West Midlands should be granted to the other combined authorities.

Nevertheless, this feels like an inflection point in the struggle to rebalance an economy grotesquely skewed towards London and the south-east. There is now cross-party consensus that regional inequality has contributed to anaemic growth and dire levels of productivity, while eroding communal self-esteem in places that have felt excluded from power and influence. Johnsonian levelling up was a cynical, superficial affair. But a new era of meaningful devolution can be the catalyst for both economic and democratic renewal, allowing English regions to write themselves back into the national story.

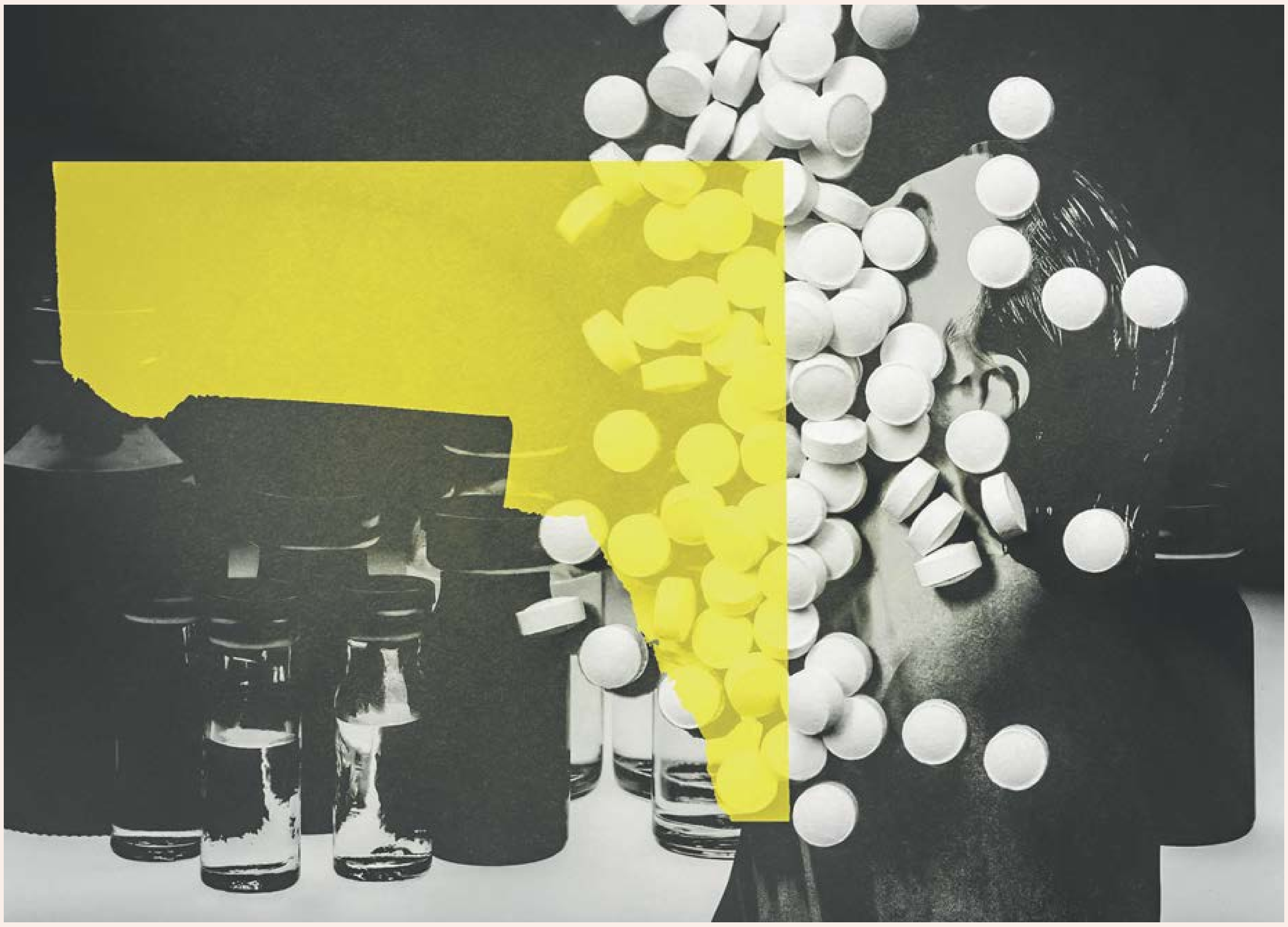


ILLUSTRATION: ELEANOR SHAKESPEARE

Cancer drugs make me realise what I'll tolerate to stay alive

Hilary Osborne



Nausea, diarrhoea, joint pain, fatigue, hair loss - the list of side-effects for most cancer drugs reads like symptoms of many illnesses in their own right. Before I had this disease, I would have considered making a GP appointment if I'd been suffering just some of the problems that I later came to write off as simply the downside of being cured. The problem with all the side-effects the drugs have caused is that as they pile up, you can lose sight of why you are taking them.

It's not as if you're not warned that chemotherapy has its downsides. Before I started my treatment for breast cancer, the oncologist went through a long list of the things that I could experience as side-effects. It covered most of an A4 sheet of paper, and she appeared to have ticked every suggested problem as possible from one or several of the cocktail of drugs I was going to be on.

At the beginning I focused on the ones that were common, and prepared myself as much as I could to face them. I stocked up on sugar-free sweets to try to tackle the horrible taste and feelings of nausea I might develop, bought E45 cream to tackle dry skin and an eyebrow pencil and stencils for when my hair starting going. I researched using a cold cap to save my hair and bought paracetamol to tackle the headache it was likely to give me.

Visiting the websites of the likes of the charities Cancer Research and Macmillan shows you how much of an issue side-effects are. In several paragraphs they describe the good the drug will do, how it is administered and how it works, then there are hundreds more lines on all the things you might suffer while taking it. But as time wore on I found myself going back to these pages for reassurances that what I was experiencing was normal.

Not all of what I experienced was normal, though. In the autumn I was sick, tired and in despair as I looked around and saw piles of hair that I'd shed. I was so exhausted that I felt as if I was dragging myself around. These problems all seemed like the side-effects of chemo - I'd sometimes move on to a new drug, and the sickness could be attributed to that. And the tiredness, which was like no other tiredness I had felt, was, I assumed, down to the cumulative effects of weeks of treatment. But rather than being temporary problems, it turned out that some of this was a sign that I'd been unlucky enough to develop some of the rare side-effects of one of my treatments.

> After my first chemo session, I left the hospital with a collection of tablets - it was probably the worst party bag ever

As well as helping me fight the cancer, the immunotherapy drugs I was taking seem to have revved up my system and caused it to turn on some healthy bits of my body. My thyroid and adrenal glands are, to use what I think is the correct scientific terminology, knackered. For the rest of my life I will need to take tablets and to carry a syringe in case of an adrenal crisis.

I've been very unlucky, particularly with the adrenal problem. Things that I would have been upset to have been diagnosed with in the past - conditions that have a proper name and entitle me to free prescriptions for life - are the byproduct of getting better. I have to remind myself that I've had the smooth with the rough.

Not all of the side-effects have been so bad. And the doctors and nurses have a fix for some of the worst temporary problems. After my first session, I left the hospital with a collection of tablets - it was probably the worst party bag ever. But these drugs can have their own side-effects.

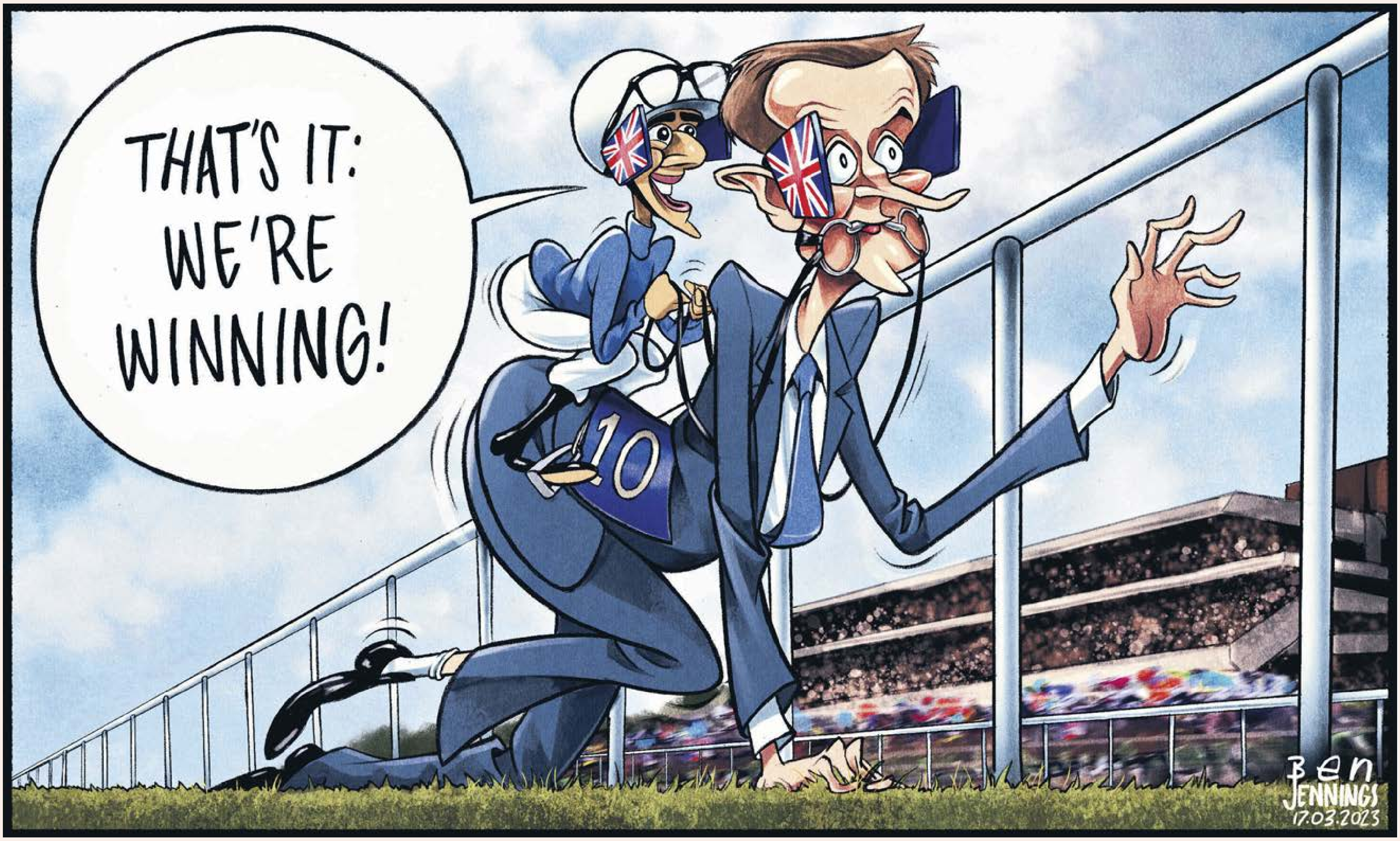
An injection to boost white blood cell count can cause a lot of pain for some. I was lucky it didn't, but if I had been suffering, I could have taken a tablet for it, but that might have done damage to my stomach lining. So there would be another tablet to address that. And on it goes.

Looking forward, there could be new side-effects from the drugs I'll be taking to attack any remaining cancer. I know they're not all going to happen - my eyebrow pencil and stencils turned out to be a waste of money, and the E45 cream wasn't any more useful than usual. The weird taste in my mouth changed according to what chemotherapy I was on, and I found ginger and hot water to be the best way to tackle it, rather than the sweets. The cold cap worked to some extent, but I lost about a third of my hair and I ended up buying a lot of hats.

I think there was probably part of me that thought by being prepared I could lessen the problems, but I know now that there's only so much you can do. You can do the research so you know what to expect, but you can waste a lot of worry on things that never happen. And the temporary effects seem less daunting now I've seen that the bad taste and the hair loss come and go, but I feel more daunted by the prospect of lasting problems.

However, I remind myself that the doctors were right about the drugs reducing the tumour, and that they and the nurses had an answer to everything I encountered in the past. Ultimately, I am willing to suck up pretty much anything if it gives me a chance of surviving a killer disease. But I will never look at those leaflets that fall out of drugs packets in the same blase way that I did before.

Hilary Osborne *is the Guardian's money and consumer editor*



TikTok's pushy sales model is fuelling debt

Iona Bain

"An infinite loop of shoppertainment." That might sound like the premise for a new Black Mirror episode. But it's actually marketing blurb from TikTok. As part of its sales pitch to brands, the Chinese-owned platform tells its clients it is "at the forefront" of persuading online consumers to part with their cash. Of course, anyone who has spent any time on TikTok, which claims to have more than a billion active monthly users, already knows this. Its sophisticated algorithm "tries to get people addicted rather than giving them what they really want," Guillaume Chaslot, the founder of AlgoTransparency, a group that has studied YouTube's recommendation system, told the New York Times.

Whether that addictive algorithm is contributing to a rising trend of young people finding themselves in debt is an important consideration. More than half of 18- to 24-year-olds have either taken on new or additional debt in the past 12 months or expect to do so in the next 12 months, according to a survey in December by TSB bank. They are about seven times more likely to do so than their grandparents' generation.

Young people's spending is influenced by what they see on social media. They say so themselves - videos featuring the hashtag #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt have more than 40bn views. TikTok's own research found 52% of millennial users in the UK had bought a product because they had seen it on the site in the last year, rising to 60% of Gen Z users. And a 2021 Adweek survey in the US found TikTok users were potentially "the most dedicated group of buyers from social media".

In the UK, data on how TikTok is influencing consumer behaviour has been scarce. What is clear is that spending inducements are at the heart of TikTok's business model. The company's global ad revenue soared from $4bn (£3.3bn) in 2021 to more than $11.6bn last year and it made $205m more from in-app purchases than Facebook, Twitter and Instagram combined.

There are small signs of a backlash. One influencer on the site, Paige Pritchard, recently went viral for discussing how TikTok can fuel overspending: "The more time I spend on this app, the more I'm seeing these themes coming through about what your consumption habits should look like that actually aren't very normal."

Examples of "cash-stuffing", where young people put physical money into envelopes to avoid mindless digital shopping, have also become increasingly popular on the site. But such active and often laborious attempts to break free from a compulsion to spend remind us of how powerful the structures can be.

The algorithm creates a scarcity mindset among its users. As a poster on Reddit's MakeUpRehab forum put it: "I find myself having this 'omg I need to buy this NOW before TikTok causes it to sell out' urge." A behavioural economist could hardly put it better.

Teenagers and twentysomethings have always been susceptible to peer pressure, fear of missing out and over-consumption. But this problem is compounded by patchy financial education in schools, compulsive technology at our fingertips and an increasingly invasive, hazardous consumer environment in which one-click purchases and borrowing through "buy now, pay later" options have never been easier.

Young people are already weathering acute financial and psychological pressures caused by the cost of living crisis. A Sky News-Ipsos poll found young people are cutting back on socialising, taking on more work and moving back in with their parents as they struggle to pay their bills. Data from Deloitte's 2022 global Gen Z and Millennial Survey shows that a third of Gen Z respondents worry about the cost of living above all; 45% live paycheck to paycheck, and just over a quarter doubt they'll retire comfortably.

Regulators have already taken aim at "buy now, pay later" schemes, promising tougher regulations to protect consumers. But I suspect tighter legislation will be no match for the power of shoppertainment in getting young people to part with their cash. They urgently need access to better financial education, and greater support to practise social media hygiene if they are to escape a culture of chronic overspending.

#TikTokmademebuyit is no badge of honour for a generation already fighting multiple attacks on their wealth. It's time to kick that "infinite loop" - and the billions it generates off our backs - into touch. Perhaps #IDontBuyTikTok could be a start?

*

Iona Bain *is a financial journalist, founder of the Young(ish) Money blog and author of Spare Change & Own It*

Letters

guardian.letters@theguardian.com
@guardianletters

Established 1906

Country diary

Crook, County Durham

There have been some fine displays of catkins in hedgerows here, but none compares with the corkscrew hazel flowering outside my window. It's a mutant form of native hazel, with a compact canopy of sinuous branches that have lost all sense of direction: they spiral, twist, curl, bend and sometimes double back on themselves. For the last two weeks, they have been smothered in a curtain of long golden catkins. This afternoon, tree sparrows are using the tree as a staging post, en route to the bird feeders. When they land the catkins dance, shedding ephemeral, will-o'-the-wisp clouds of golden pollen.

Corkscrew hazel is horticultural Marmite: some gardeners love its sculptural quality in winter, especially when it is iced with a light fall of snow; others dislike its grotesquely distorted, dark green, hispid summer foliage. But it has a story to tell that is as convoluted as its limbs. It might have languished unnoticed in a hedgerow, but for a passerby with an eye for the unusual, a generous vicar-botanist, a music hall celebrity and generations of gardeners skilled in the ancient art of grafting.

Some credit its discovery, in a Gloucestershire hedgerow 160 years ago, to the earl of Ducie; others suspect that a tenant found it and passed it to Ducie's gardener, who gave a cutting to the green-fingered Canon Henry Ellacombe, an eminent plant collector who distributed it among the Victorian gardening elite. It might have remained a conversation piece in their arboreta but for its appearance on a music hall stage.

Enter, Sir Harry Lauder, Scottish vaudeville superstar, carrying a wonky walking stick made from a corkscrew hazel branch. A household name, the highest paid entertainer in the world, the first British recording artist to sell one million records, with the kind of reach that today's social media influencers dream about. After he used it in his act as a theatrical prop, the tree that botanical cognoscenti called *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' became Harry Lauder's Walking Stick.

There are thousands of corkscrew hazels in gardens today. The mutation is not passed on through the seeds, so they can only be propagated by grafting scions – clones of that original hedgerow tree – on to wild hazel rootstocks.
Phil Gates

We may edit letters. Submission and publication of letters is subject to our terms and conditions: see theguardian.com/letters-terms

Iraq's legacy of distrust still feeds politics today

John Harris hits the nail on the head when he says the events of 2003 helped to destroy public trust in the government (British politics broke on the day we went to war with Iraq, 13 March). That tragic legacy still runs true today.

I respect the work that Tony Blair and the less recognised Mo Mowlam achieved in bringing peace to Northern Ireland. However, Blair's legacy has shaped a generation that view politicians as untrustworthy. Blair, Alastair Campbell and their cronies in the government of the day manipulated the evidence available to them to justify the war in Iraq.

Today's politicians, learning their craft from Blair's legacy, have successfully positioned themselves such that they can use the benefit of the dark arts of modern politics for their own personal benefit.
Stuart Finegan
Lewes, East Sussex

● In the autumn of 2009, I was one of 30 or so members of various NGO delegations invited to attend an early morning pre-Copenhagen climate summit with Gordon Brown at Downing Street. "I need you to get as many of your members out there this weekend on this climate march, so that I can go to that meeting and tell world leaders that the British people demand action," he told us.

At the end of his address he invited responses. I was the first to raise a hand. "Prime minister, the last time people actively took to the streets in February 2003, there were more than a million of them and you went ahead, ignored them and declared war on the pretext of faulty intelligence. Don't you think that unless you make a categorical apology for misjudging them then, it will be impossible for people like me to convince them that this kind of demonstration of public will is worthwhile?"

You could have heard a pin drop. He muttered something about now not being the time to go over old ground. At the end of the meeting, I was accosted by No 10 officials who told me that my contribution was "far from helpful".

Fourteen years on, I still remain of the opinion that the body politic as far as the Iraq war is concerned is in need of healing.
Mark Dowd
Manchester

● The date British politics broke was somewhat earlier than John Harris states. It was the day Tony Blair was elected Labour leader. I gave up voting Labour when he became leader as I could see he was just a male Margaret Thatcher. At the end of his first term, the Labour vote had crashed by 2.8 million and he only won as the Tories were even more unpopular. People I lived near in Nuneaton and worked with in the West Midlands gave up voting as the parties were "all the same". When they next voted, it was for Brexit – something they felt they could influence. There is still a feeling in Nuneaton that "they are all the same", and there is little faith in Keir Starmer.

This is Blair's legacy: Brexit, Iraq and the most unpleasant and extreme government since the first world war.
John Parkin
Nuneaton, Warwickshire

● I recall Jeremy Corbyn's words, spoken at the anti-war rally in 2003, in which I'm proud to say that I took part: "It will set off a spiral of conflict, of hate, of misery that will fuel the wars of the future."
Suzanne Saxby
Wrexham

Defence policy a costly balancing act

The Aukus security pact between Australia, Britain and the US (Report,14 March), together with news of the second rise in defence spending in two years, is shocking and alarming. Shocking, because it comes at a time when our vital public services are crying out for funding; alarming because, at a time when building bridges and serious cooperation are needed to address the existential climate crisis, we are going all out to intensify hostility with China and affirm the dominance of the west.

The building of nuclear submarines will, of course, create employment, along with profits for the companies involved, and that is true of all the other armaments that are to be manufactured. But the arms industry consumes energy, and the emissions caused will drive climate change. War and its preparations are the planet's greatest enemy. The equivalent resources put into building capacity for clean energy would be the means to end our dependence on fossil fuels and help protect our imperilled planet. Likewise, the rebuilding of our depleted diplomatic service could help build positive relationships rather than enmity.
Diana Francis
Bath

● The prime minister's refreshed review of security and foreign policy notably goes out of its way to press the case for a domestic nuclear energy strategy (Government focuses on Beijing but the security of Europe is more important to Britain, 13 March). In committing to "proactively look for opportunities to align delivery of the civil and defence nuclear enterprises", a long-hidden military dependency on civilian infrastructures is at last openly admitted. Nuclear submarines would be too costly to build and maintain without an "industrial base" largely funded by elevated consumer electricity bills.

Until now, these military costs have been invisibly subsidised, outside the defence budget, off the public books and beyond proper accountability. As a result, climate action has been less effective, more costly and slower than would otherwise be achievable by what the National Infrastructure Commission rightly identifies as more affordable and renewable alternatives. So this newfound candour is welcome. But is this military-nuclear empire bling worth this crippling cost? Now they are no longer deniable, perhaps the issues at stake can at last be democratically debated?
Prof Andy Stirling
University of Sussex

We men are also juggling jobs and childcare

In response to your letter on juggling jobs and childcare (15 March), I strongly oppose the idea that women are the only ones juggling the demanding world of simultaneous childcare and careers. I have a demanding job, but work from home, so I'm the one receiving or picking up our kids in the afternoon, prepping dinner, and twice weekly caring for our three children – four years old and under – for the entire evening.

My wife owns a business and is trying to establish herself in the community, and this takes a lot of hours to accomplish. As a result, I also take on the brunt of household chores including dishes, garbage, vacuuming, laundry and all the outdoor work. The idea that women are the only ones in these trenches is no longer true. I support my wife to be successful in her role, but it means sacrifices for me as well. Don't forget I too need to excel at my role despite these added layers of responsibility.
Mathew Lee
Stittsville, Ontario, Canada

Corrections and clarifications

● **Solvers of cryptic crossword No 29,018 (15 March, Journal, p8) may have been puzzled by the clue for 14 down, which called for a solution that did not quite match the grid. The clue should have been: "Priest upset with Welsh occupying church in Mancunian town (9)".**

● **The Bank of London is a clearing bank, not a "lender" as an article stated (Regulators sleep a little easier after three day fight to stave off contagion, 14 March, p28).**

Editorial complaints and corrections can be sent to guardian.readers@theguardian.com

Screen time is good for grandparents too

Re your article (Why screen time for babies is no bad thing, 16 March), screen time is a good thing for grandparents too – as an adult learning tool. I now know much that I never knew before from watching, with my granddaughter, gems such as Ada Twist, Scientist (Netflix) and Maddie's Do You Know (CBeebies).
Anthony Lawton
Church Langton, Leicestershire

● I wanted to report that the frogspawn appeared yesterday morning – the latest date in the last 16 years (Letters, 2 March). Jocelyn Hanson asked how the frogs travelled to our new home (Letters, 11 March). Nine of them came in a plastic box, and lived in a cement-mixing bath for several months while their new home was built.
Judith Abbs
London

● A few weeks ago, I was startled to hear the ever courteous BBC presenter Mishal Hussain say, while talking about the teachers' strike, that non-striking staff "can't be arsed to cover for their colleagues". A northerner, I had been momentarily misled by the long "a" in asked (Letters, 11 March).
Hazel Pennington
Bath

● Why does Ian Winstanley want to dispel the image of the gentle, graceful whippet (Letters, 16 March)? We have two beauties, Woody and Sharkey.
Pete Lawson
Sunderland

● The Guardian didn't get to Penistone either last Friday (Letters, 14 March), but disappointingly the Daily Mail did. Another example of rightwing bias?
Richard Webb
Penistone, South Yorkshire







Dorothy Iannone

Artist whose prevailing subject was intense love in all its forms, from romantic to erotic

The best-thumbed book in the studio of Dorothy Iannone, who has died aged 89, was a paperback edition of Antony and Cleopatra. As in Shakespeare's tragedy, the prevailing subject of the American artist's paintings, sculpture and video installation was intense love, ranging from the romantic to the erotic and spiritual.

Moving on from abstract paintings that incorporated lines from the play and other classics, in the 1970s Iannone created a series titled Eros – pictorial paintings formally influenced by Egyptian frescoes, Byzantine mosaics and ancient fertility statues that revelled in their joyful vulgarity.

Wiggle Your Ass for Me (1970) depicts a woman poking at the anus of a man, the work's title tattooed across her midriff; in similar style is Let Me Squeeze Your Fat Cunt (1970), in which a man lies submissively across a woman's lap as she reaches for his penis. Later works ranged from an artist's book containing a list of all her lovers to I Was Thinking of You (1975), a video featuring the artist masturbating, the monitor mounted in a box painted with intricate erotic scenes.

This exploration of what Iannone dubbed "ecstatic unity" reached its zenith in An Icelandic Saga (1978-86), a series of 48 black-and-white ink drawings in which she describes a trip made a decade previously to Reykjavik from New York with James Upham, her then husband, only for Iannone to fall in love with the Swiss artist Dieter Roth.

At the Hotel Holt she and Roth "frolicked verbally" and she allowed him to kiss the hem of her skirt. In a later panel she recalls in spidery capitals that when Upham went to buy tonic to mix with vodka, Roth tried to get Iannone into bed. She refused, but consented, she writes in the third person, "to show him her ass, an easy movement since in those days, she scorned underwear".

She left Upham the day the couple arrived back in New York, returning to Iceland within the month, and made Roth her muse.

A 1962 portrait of Iannone taken by her then husband, James Upham. Top right, Brokeback Mountain, 2010, and The Queen of the Amazons and Achilles, colour silkscreen on paper, 2007
AIR DE PARIS AND PERES PROJECTS

"The two of us became the stars of my work, and instead of using lines from poems which I loved in my paintings, now I recorded what we had said to each other, or I wrote my own texts. No longer was I obsessed with the high love of Antony and Cleopatra, now I had found my own."

Dorothy was born in Boston to a family of Italian immigrants. Her father died when she was two and she was raised by her mother, Sarah Iannone, a dressmaker. She recalled attending church regularly until she took communion without having confessed to sexual relations with her boyfriend, a mortal sin that caused her to abandon the Catholic faith. She later embraced Buddhism.

In 1953 Iannone enrolled at Boston University to study English and American literature, continuing as a postgraduate at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. She married Upham in 1958. The couple moved to New York and took up art, painting in the abstract expressionist style.

Upham was from a wealthy family and they financed their trips abroad. In Kyoto, Iannone developed a series of collages using gold leaf and Japanese paper, and she would credit her time in Asia as having a profound influence on her turn to figuration. Returning from another trip, to Paris in 1961, Iannone was stopped at a New York airport, when customs officers found a copy of Henry Miller's Tropic of Cancer in her baggage.

> **She was stopped at a New York airport when officers found a copy of Henry Miller's Tropic of Cancer in her baggage**

The book at the time was banned in the US over its explicit content. Iannone refused to say that she was carrying Miller's recollections of sexual encounters for research – which might have enabled her to sidestep its confiscation – but insisted she was reading the title purely for pleasure. With the backing of the American Civil Liberties Union, she won a lawsuit against the government for the return of the paperback, effectively overturning the import ban.

In Düsseldorf, where she lived with Roth, her work became increasingly explicit and she, too, faced censorship: in 1968 a pack of tarot cards, Ta(Rot) Pack (1968-69), depicting her and the sculptor having sex, was removed from a group show at Kunsthalle Bern. Four years later, UK customs destroyed some of Iannone's artist books. "When my work was not censored outright, it was either mildly ridiculed, or described as folkloric," she said years later.

After Iannone and Roth separated in 1974, she moved first to the south of France and then Berlin, on a DAAD scholarship, where she stayed until her death. She remained close to Roth, and a book of their correspondence, which continued until he died in 1998, was published in 2002.

In 1976 Iannone had her first museum show at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, and in 1978, as the Iranian revolution was fermenting, her work was shown at the Museum of Modern Art, Tehran. Two years later, at the Neue Galerie, Sammlung Ludwig, in Aachen, she juxtaposed her art with a series of small bejewelled sculptures created by her mother as personal gifts and sent by post from 1959 onwards. Further works by her mother – Sarah Pucci, as she had become – were shown alongside Iannone's at Hannah Hoffman gallery, Los Angeles, in 2022.

Though Iannone was never wholly ignored, institutional appreciation of her six decades of art increased in the 2000s. I Was Thinking of You was recreated at the Tate Modern in 2005 and for the 2006 Whitney Biennial. In 2009 she had her first US museum exhibition at the New Museum in New York, a small show titled Lioness, referring to Roth's nickname for her.

A series she started that year titled Movie People, of painted cut-outs mounted on wood depicting scenes from films including Morocco, Lolita and Brokeback Mountain, were among the works exhibited in Innocent and Aware, a 2013 solo show at Camden Arts Centre in London. In 2018 she was commissioned to produce a mural for the High Line in New York, portraying three colourful Statues of Liberty and the words "I Lift My Lamp Beside the Golden Door", from a poem by Emma Lazarus.

A retrospective of the artist was held at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark last year.

Oliver Basciano

Dorothy Iannone, artist, born 9 August 1933; died 26 December 2022

obituaries@theguardian.com
@guardianobits

John Harries

Leading physicist behind the design of innovative instruments to monitor the Earth's atmosphere

The consensus on how human activity is changing the climate is now so comprehensive that it is easy to forget that crucial to building this scientific understanding has been the acquisition of many careful environmental measurements.

John Harries, who has died aged 76, was involved in designing, developing and deploying instruments that were placed on planes, balloons and satellites to measure the heat radiation emitted by the Earth. His work resulted in the first direct observational evidence of an increase in the carbon dioxide greenhouse effect.

Visible light is radiation with a spectrum of colours from blue at short wavelengths to red at long wavelengths. Radiation at even longer wavelengths is invisible, but the spectrum continues with heat radiation in the infrared and far-infrared. Each gas in the atmosphere absorbs and emits radiation uniquely, having its own characteristic spectrum, and, knowing this, we can interpret measurements of radiation to reveal the concentration of that gas.

John was an expert in how to take advantage of measurements made at infrared to longer wavelengths. This started while he was working in the 1970s at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) in Teddington, London, using a spectrometer in the lab to look at the far infrared properties of various gases.

Motivated in part by the Met Office, which was interested in measuring atmospheric water vapour high in the atmosphere, where it is vital in determining both temperature and composition, John then, with his colleague Nigel Swann, developed a version of the lab instrument to fly on planes and balloons. They would sleep in vans in order to be prepared for their 4am balloon launches.

In 1980 John was appointed associate director of the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory near Didcot, Oxfordshire. During the years following the 1984 discovery of the Antarctic "ozone hole", John's team used data from Nasa satellites to shed light on the factors determining the relationship between stratospheric water vapour and ozone, to what extent the existence and depth of the hole depended on wind strength and on how air transported gases up and down in the atmosphere.

I worked with John after he was enticed to Imperial College London in 1994 to establish a new research group in Earth Observation. This was a productive period of his career. One important element was the development of the Geostationary Earth Radiation Budget (GERB) instrument.

The Earth's surface temperature depends on the balance between the radiative energy it receives from the sun and that which it loses back to space, with global heating taking place when more energy is absorbed than emitted.

Collaborating with colleagues in the UK, Belgium and Italy, John led this project from concept to deployment on Meteosat, a European meteorological satellite, which retains a position high above a fixed point on the equator. Launched on four satellites since 2004, GERB has provided a continuous stream of key data. Another of John's innovations was the only instrument capable of measuring far-infrared spectrums from aircraft. The resulting data has provided new understanding of the behaviour of water vapour and ice cloud high in the atmosphere.



Harries, below, in 1999 with the Haloe that flew in orbit for almost 15 years on Nasa's Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite

In the 90s, John began to develop ideas about mounting a far-infrared spectrometer on a satellite. The European Space Agency (ESA) is now committed to launching such an instrument on a satellite in 2027. Measurements from this new mission will improve confidence in the accuracy of climate change assessments.

As well as creating instruments, John was keen to make sure that the data they produced was exploited to the full. He helped to pioneer the direct use of satellite infrared observations to detect spectral signatures of global heating, and in 2001 he co-published a groundbreaking paper in Nature that provided the first direct observational evidence of an increase over decades of the carbon dioxide greenhouse effect.

From 2010 until his retirement in 2013 John was the first chief scientific adviser for Wales and established the new national science strategy, Science for Wales.

Among his many other roles, he served as president of the Royal Meteorological Society and chair of the ESA's Earth observation programme board. He was awarded Nasa's distinguished public service medal in 2011 and the Mason gold medal of the Royal Meteorological Society in 2014.

John was born in Sedgefield, County Durham. His parents, Marion (nee Price) and Brynmor Harries, were from south Wales, and he was proud of his Welsh roots. His father's army job meant frequent relocation, so John and his two younger siblings went to a variety of schools. He attended Bishop Wordsworth's grammar school in Salisbury, Bournemouth school, and for the sixth form Burford school, in Oxfordshire. He studied physics at the University of Birmingham, graduating in 1967, and immediately took the post of scientific officer at the NPL.

While employed there, in 1971 he obtained his doctorate at King's College London. He met his wife, Sheila Basford, at Birmingham, and they married in 1968. In 2018 John was diagnosed with dementia and the couple moved to Aberystwyth to be near family.

He is survived by Sheila, their children, Paul, James and Rebecca, and seven grandchildren, and his siblings, Jean and David.

Joanna Haigh

John Edward Harries, atmospheric physicist, born 26 March 1946; died 21 December 2022

> **Harries and his colleague would sleep in vans to be prepared for their 4am balloon launch**

Birthdays

Prof John Baines, Egyptologist, 77; **Jeff Banks**, fashion designer, 80; **Pattie Boyd**, model and photographer, 79; **John Boyega**, actor, 31; **The Right Rev Sarah Bullock**, bishop of Shrewsbury, 59; **Caroline Corr**, drummer and singer, 50; **Lesley-Anne Down**, actor, 69; **Patrick Duffy**, actor, 74; **Prof Michael Finnissy**, composer and pianist, 77; **William Gibson**, novelist, 75; **Grimes (Claire Boucher)**, musician, 35; **Clare Grogan**, singer and actor, 61; **Mia Hamm**, footballer, 51; **Hozier**, singer and songwriter, 33; **Carrie Johnson**, director of communications, Aspinall Foundation, 35; **Sir Robin Knox-Johnston**, yachtsman, 84; **Rob Lowe**, actor, 59; **Lord (Stuart) Rose**, chair, Asda, and former chief executive, Marks and Spencer, 74; **Andrew Rosindell**, Conservative MP, 57; **Sir Patrick Vallance**, chief scientific adviser to the UK government, 63; **Mike Wood**, Conservative MP, 47.

Letter
Jonathan Raban

Jonathan Raban (obituary, 19 January) describes how he became a lone sailor in For Love & Money (1987): "I floated down the Euphrates on a raft with Freya Stark [and] sailed from Gloucester to the Isle of Wight on a converted Baltic Trader." He is referring to two features he wrote in the 1970s for Radio Times, when I was its editor. The money "would settle the gas bill, the phone bill, the electricity bill and the month's mortgage all in one". He continued: "Another Radio Times piece sparked off two books and an obsession."

Having joined a sailing ship being used for the BBC1 TV series The Onedin Line, to his surprise he was not seasick, and "in the morning we were edging along the Cornish coast. From three miles or so offshore, England looked as foreign as Arabia – a long, low, moody gorse-clad island … the sea a wilderness as truly wild as a desert or rain forest. The idea lodged in my head and wouldn't budge. Four years later I was sailing alone past the same stretch of coast in a solid seaboat of my own", which led to Coasting (1986).

Geoffrey Cannon

Announcements

In Memoriam

McWILLIAMS, Lillian Mary, second anniversary. My love. My life. My contessa. Siempre mi querida x Martin.

For Announcements, Acknowledgments, Adoptions, Anniversaries, Birthdays, Births, Deaths, Engagements, Memorial Services and In Memoriam, email us at announcements@theguardian.com including your name, address and telephone number or phone 0203 353 2114.

Puzzles

Yesterday's solutions

Killer sudoku

Easy

1	8	3	4	2	5	6	7	9
6	4	2	8	9	7	5	3	1
5	9	7	3	1	6	8	2	4
2	3	5	6	8	4	9	1	7
8	7	1	9	5	2	4	6	3
4	6	9	1	7	3	2	5	8
9	2	8	7	6	1	3	4	5
3	1	6	5	4	9	7	8	2
7	5	4	2	3	8	1	9	6

Medium

3	8	2	6	9	1	7	5	4
6	1	7	8	5	4	2	3	9
5	9	4	7	2	3	6	1	8
7	3	1	5	4	9	8	6	2
9	5	6	2	3	8	4	7	1
4	2	8	1	6	7	5	9	3
1	6	5	3	8	2	9	4	7
2	4	3	9	7	6	1	8	5
8	7	9	4	1	5	3	2	6

Codeword

B	O	M	B	S		C	L	I	C	K	S	
O		A		Q		A		T		H		E
S	O	J	O	U	R	N		C	H	A	I	N
O		E		I		O		H		K		T
M	I	S	P	R	I	N	T		L	I	L	O
		T		T			I		E			M
T	O	Y	S		S	Y	L	L	A	B	U	B
H			T		E		E		S			E
I	N	F	E	R	R	E	D		H	E	L	D
C			A		V			S		P		
K	I	N	D		E	X	A	C	T	I	N	G
I		U		S		E		O		T		O
S	Y	R	U	P		N	A	R	W	H	A	L
H		S		A		O		E		E		L
	V	E	R	M	I	N		R	I	T	Z	Y

Cryptic crossword

Solution No. 29,019

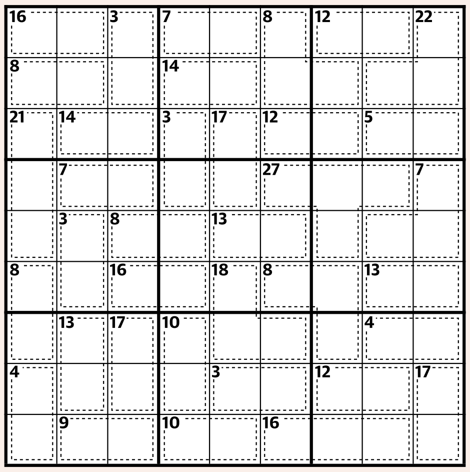
		A	S	T	R	O	P	H	Y	S	I	C	S	
O		D		E		M		A		T		H		S
D	I	V	A	N		B	A	L	T	I	M	O	R	E
I		O		D		R		F		T		I		R
S	E	C	R	E	T	E		B	A	C	K	R	U	B
H		A		N				O		H				I
A	N	T	I	C	L	I	M	A	X		A	G	R	A
		E		Y		N		R		C		O		
G	A	S	P		H	A	R	D	B	O	I	L	E	D
O				M		M				L		D		I
A	M	O	R	O	S	O		G	O	U	R	M	E	T
W		M		D		R		R		M		E		H
A	M	E	R	I	C	A	N	O		N	U	D	G	E
Y		G		S		T		O		E		A		R
	F	A	S	H	I	O	N	M	O	D	E	L		

Stuck? For help call **0906 200 83 83**. Calls cost £1.10 per minute, plus your phone company's access charge. Service supplied by ATS. Call **0330 333 6946** for customer service (charged at standard rate). **Want more?** Get access to more than 4,000 puzzles at **theguardian.com/crossword**. To buy puzzle books, visit **guardianbookshop.com** or call **0330 333 6846**.*

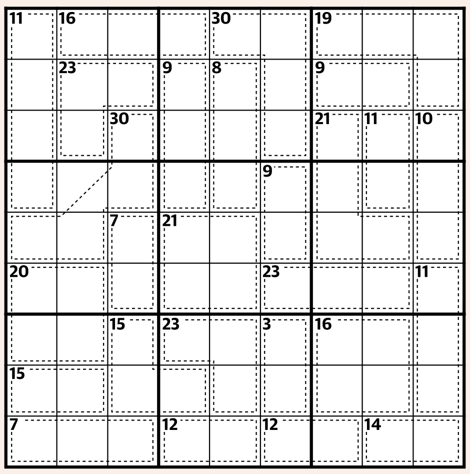
Killer sudoku

Easy

The normal rules of Sudoku apply: fill each row, column and 3x3 box with all the numbers from 1 to 9. In addition, the digits in each inner shape (marked by dots) must add up to the number in the top corner of that box. No digit can be repeated within an inner shape.

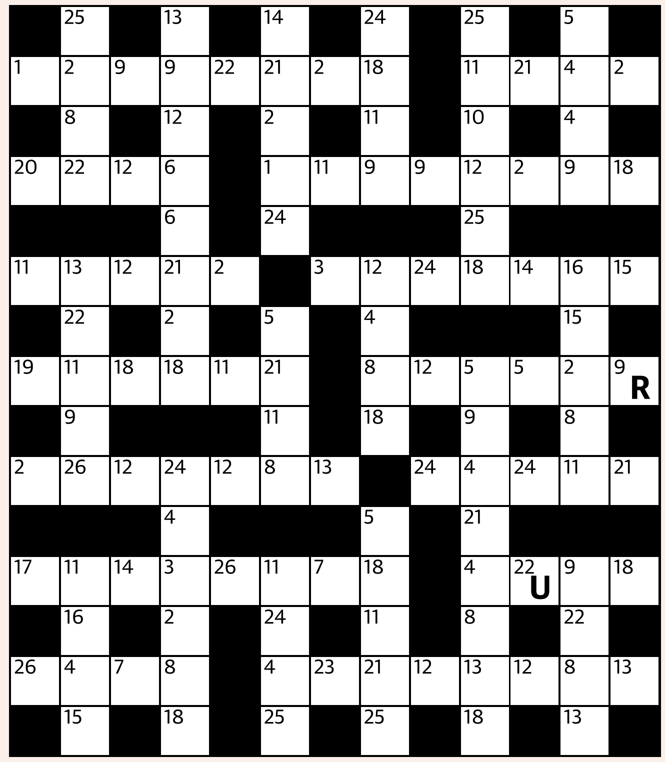


Medium



Codeword

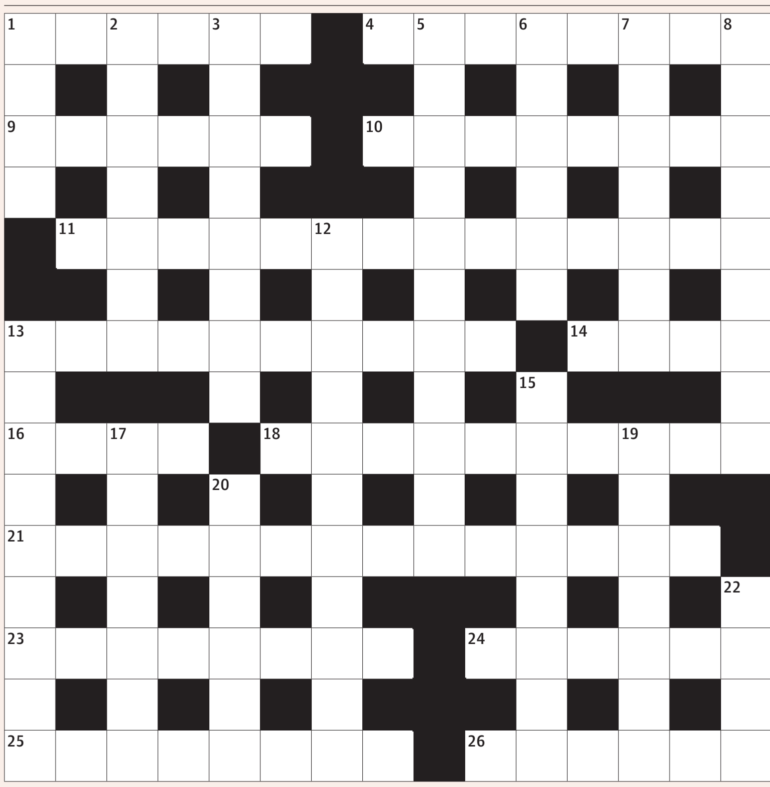
Each letter of the alphabet makes at least one appearance in the grid, and is represented by the same number wherever it appears. The letters decoded should help you to identify other letters and words in the grid.



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 R	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22 U	23	24	25	26

Guardian cryptic crossword No 29,020 set by Philistine



Across

1 1 in 7 is not happy (6)
4 Bad luck? Slap this on your head (8)
9,20 We stay on plan to protect green growth — no turning back here (3-3,6)
10 Monster like Radovan Karadžic sounding certain to make a comeback (8)
11 So take a breath and pay? (7,3,4)
13 See 1 down
14 See 16
16,14 Allow mother to have a turn first, being cooperative (8)
18 Other set wins fight in court? (7,3)
21 Perhaps Austin's plant is not good enough (14)
23 Excellent foot soldiers manoeuvring without loss (2,3,3)
24 Game of golf hosted by newlywed (6)
25 Elected president starts probing work assistants (8)
26 Troublemakers temporarily live on board (6)

Down

1,22,13across My muck sends off courteous setter (8,8,2)
2 Channel says you are heartbroken (7)
3 This philosophy gives patriarchal extremists a boost (8)
5 Need to take things like a man? Opt out! (11)
6 Unclaimed billions brought up to frame politician (3-3)
7 Underwear turned up in search for explosive (3,4)
8 Dance when 17, confused about debutante's first kiss (3,2,4)
12 Burn smog, OK with energy (2,2,2,5)
13 Progressive finished university (9)
15 Fancy stereo discs occasionally used for the select few (8)
17 After 50% increase, party slackened (5,2)
19 During time of economic prosperity, socialist having little to do? (7)
20 See 9
22 See 1

G2



Unleash the beast!

Alexander Skarsgård

on sleaze, Succession and his primal scream

The Guardian

Friday 17/03/23

Film & Music

Stone immaculate

Sly Stone's finest songs – ranked!

page 2

Courtney Love

The rock'n'roll hall of shame

page 5



CROSSTOWN CONCERTS





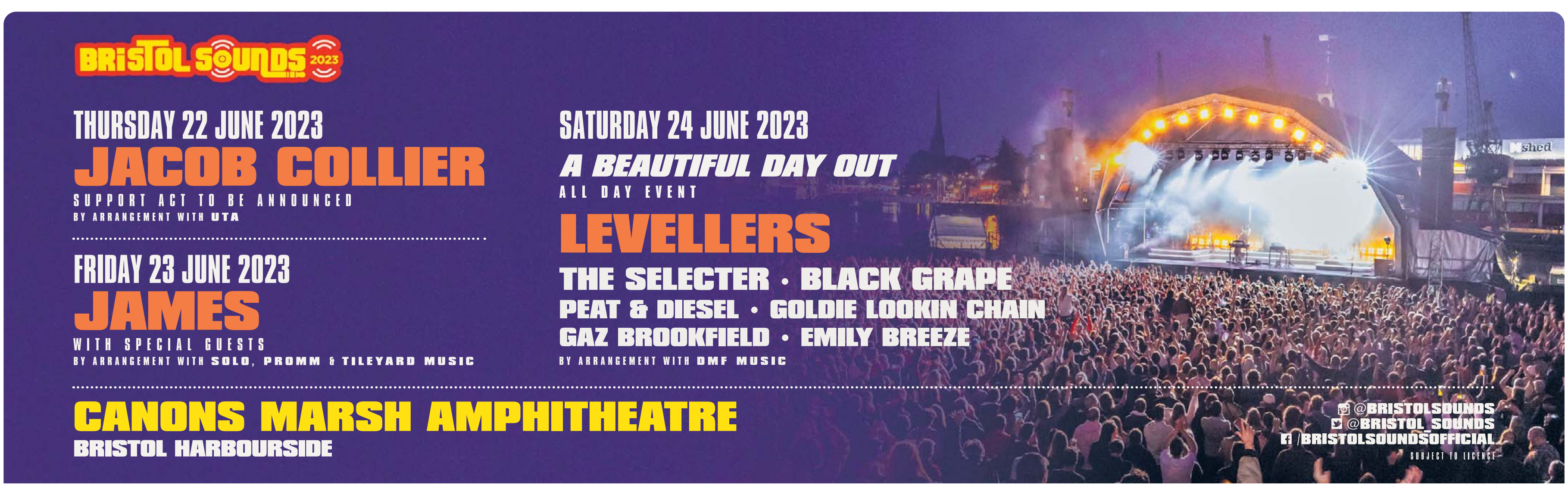












TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM

SEETICKETS.COM ✳ **GIGANTIC**.COM ✳ **TICKETMASTER**.CO.UK ✳ **TICKETWEB**.UK
ALTTICKETS.COM ✳ **GIGSANDTOURS**.COM ✳ **GIGSINSCOTLAND**.COM

@CROSSTOWN_LIVE /CROSSTOWNCONCERTS @CROSSTOWNCONCERTS

Ranked! Sly and the Family Stone songs

As Sly Stone turns 80, *Alexis Petridis* rates the best of his music



1
I Want to Take You Higher *(1969)*
There's a Riot Goin' On might be their greatest album, but I Want to Take You Higher shows what makes Sly and the Family Stone so special: an impossibly exciting flashpoint of raw-throated vocals, fuzzed-out bass, dive-bombing guitar riffs and drumming as relentless as its lyrical invitations to dance (or take drugs, or both). The zenith of the band's first, groundbreaking phase, before darkness set in, it is as compelling today as it was more than half a century ago.

2
Family Affair *(1971)*
Possibly the bleakest US No 1 single ever, Family Affair draws a firm line under 60s idealism. Rose Stone's blank-eyed delivery of the hook; its fatalistic lyrics given a shrugging, so-what? twist by Sly's stoned drawl; the muffled, distorted sound lending a claustrophobic, etiolated quality to its muted funk. Chilling and incredible.

3
Everyday People *(1969)*
Sly and the Family Stone's first US No 1 has been endlessly sampled and covered by everyone from Miles Davis to Maroon 5 and Belle and Sebastian. Everyday People distils the band's initial essence – multiple vocals, propulsive bass, lyrics preaching tolerance in a fractured US – into two minutes and 22 seconds of perfect pop.

4
Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Again) *(1969)*
Intended for an unfinished follow-up to Stand!, Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Again), which debuted the hugely influential slap bass technique invented by Larry Graham, ended up a farewell to the party-starting original Family Stone sound. The lyrics run down their hits, but twitchy lines about guns and the devil hint at what is to come.

5
Dance to the Music *(1967)*
Their label's demand for a commercial single resulted in a song derided by Sly and the Family Stone as "unhip" and "glorified Motown", a baffling assessment both of Dance to the Music's pounding exuberance and subsequent influence. Its distorted guitars and shifting sound changed Motown, almost singlehandedly ushering in the psychedelic soul era.

6
Hot Fun in the Summertime *(1969)*
Stone's earliest bands dealt in doo-wop, which seemed to infect Hot Fun in the Summertime nearly a decade on. It is a glorious single, and beautifully orchestrated – a rarity for the Family Stone. Sun-drenched, carefree and wistfully autumnal in equal measure, it also unexpectedly inspired Genesis's 1981 single Misunderstanding.

7
Sing a Simple Song *(1969)*
If the late Cynthia Robinson's greatest vocal interjection is Dance to the Music's "All the squares go home!", the second is her roar of Sing a Simple Song's title. The flip side of Everyday People in every sense, it offers thrillingly raw, uncut funk. And the live version in the Summer of Soul documentary is a monster.

8
Stand! *(1969)*
The title track of their first classic album was as gospel-influenced as Sly and the Family Stone ever got: the chorus soars heavenwards, the moment, a minute before the end, where the song explodes into a breakbeat, is fabulous, and "You've been sitting much too long, there's a permanent crease in your right and wrong" is a great lyric.

9
If You Want Me to Stay *(1973)*
By 1973, things were completely out of control in Sly Stone's world, and yet he still made Fresh, a brilliant album that turned There's a Riot Goin' On's muffled, elastic sound to more concise, commercial use. His final hit, If You Want Me to Stay, is an understated masterpiece of insouciant soul.

10
Runnin' Away *(1971)*
Runnin' Away sums up the creepiness of There's a Riot Goin' On. Its melody is nursery-rhyme-like in its simplicity, amplified by the childlike vocal, and the trumpet feels perky, but it is all caked in alienating distortion and the lyrics appear to laugh at their protagonist's hopeless plight. Its eeriness gets under your skin.

See the full list of 20 at theguardian.com/music

PHOTOGRAPH: LEGACY RECORDINGS SONY MUSIC ARCHIVE
COVER: CHARLIE CLIFT

Playlist



1 **Amaarae**
Reckless & Sweet
The brilliant Ghanaian singer returns with a song that glimmers like a neon-lit pool (the subtle acoustic guitar flourishes reminiscent of Darkchild-era R&B) with its doe-eyed account of hair-trigger intimacy.

2 **Jpegmafia & Danny Brown**
Lean Beef Patty
The first from an inspired pairing of far-left-brained MCs: a gonzoid beat chipmunk-ifies Diddy's I Need a Girl as the pair step nimbly around blown-out drums.

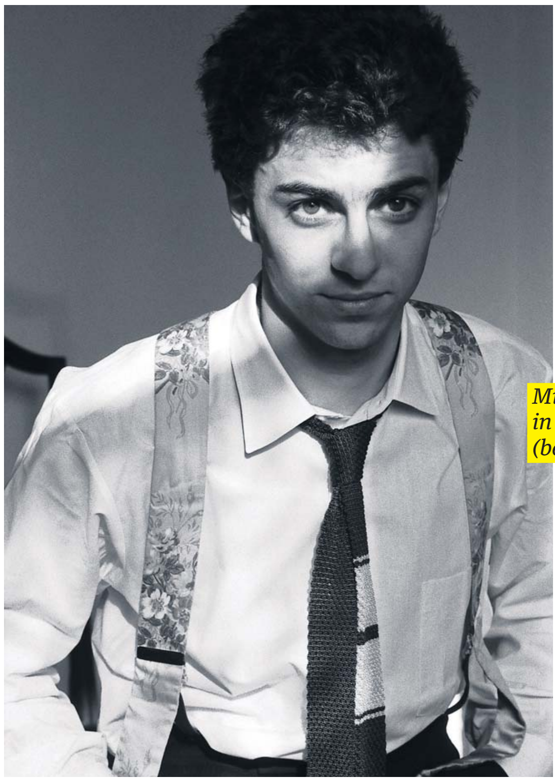
3 **Belinda Carlisle**
Big Big Love
On her first new English-language track in 26 years, Belinda Carlisle sounds fevered and voracious, singing about romance with a fatalistic drive as high-gloss 80s synths race behind her.

4 **Sabrina Carpenter**
Feather
A sublime, elaborate kiss-off that moves in a carefree glide but features just the right amount of low blows (a sarcastic "I'm so sorry for your loss") and petty asides, all couched in Carpenter's effortless soprano.

5 **Isabella Lovestory**
Latina
There's a "look but don't touch" feel to this blown-out reggaeton celebration of being a Latina woman, which writhes in the same filthy, confident seam as Peaches' biggest hits.

6 **Molly Nilsson**
Hard Feelings
Very slightly more hi-fi than usual, but still with gorgeous smudged echo on her vocals, the Swedish master of yearning pop simply doesn't miss.

7 **Fenne Lily**
In My Own Time
A lovely tear-jerker from the Bristol songwriter, who moots the gains and losses that time passing might bring – although cottony acoustic guitar and hushed vocals anchor her in the moment.



Michael Zilkha in 1978 and (below) today



Kid Creole and the Coconuts; (below) Suicide's Alan Vega (left) and Martin Rev



'I could only afford people nobody else wanted'



Michael Zilkha signed Suicide and Lydia Lunch and made 'mutant disco' a cult genre in the 80s. He tells **Dave Simpson** about those wild days

> **I moved to New York in '75. I found CBGBs within three days and saw everything that was happening**

John Peel once said that Ze Records was "the best independent label in the world". The Face magazine called it the "world's most fashionable". Between 1978 and 1984, the New York record company's incredible roster included Kid Creole and the Coconuts, Lydia Lunch, Was (Not Was), Lizzy Mercier Descloux, James Chance and Suicide, who were mostly extreme characters.

"It felt more like a repertory company than a record label," says the co-founder Michael Zilkha. "We'd have these crazy showcases, with everyone except Lydia, who was outside picketing because she felt I hadn't given her enough tour support."

Four decades on, Ze is back, but as a book publisher. The idea was triggered in January 2017, when Zilkha was visited by an old friend, Glenn O'Brien, who had cancer. O'Brien was a staunch Ze champion when he edited Andy Warhol's Interview magazine in the late 70s, and in 2000 worked with Zilkha on Downtown 81, a film featuring the artist Jean-Michel Basquiat and several Ze acts.

"Glenn was down here having treatment," says Zilkha, 68, on a video call from Houston, Texas. "We were sitting in my garden and he said: 'Michael, do you think I'm a good writer?' I told him he was a great one – I loved his writings on Basquiat, Patti Smith and Trump. But he'd never been a part of the literary establishment, so I knew what he was asking."

O'Brien died a few weeks later, by which time Zilkha had promised his friend that he would publish a volume of his writing. In 2019, Intelligence for Dummies: Essays and Other Collected Writings became the first Ze book. "I told him that he would be properly recognised and I'd get it reviewed in the New York Review of Books, which it was." Now, Zilkha is launching Ze's backlist in the UK alongside two books: the former Life magazine photographer Bud Lee's powerful 1967 Newark riots memoir The War is Here; and Adele Bertei's Twist: An American Girl. This extraordinary memoir details her troubled path to forming the first gay all-girl band, the Bloods, and playing in early Ze signing James Chance and the Contortions.

"It's been kinda similar to what happened with the record label," Zilkha says with a smile. "Once I signed the Contortions, I had a track record, so I was able to sign Suicide, or Lydia. But I was only able to sign the Contortions because nobody wanted them." He describes how he convinced Chance




Lydia Lunch performing in her heyday

to form a spin-off, James White and the Blacks: "I was interested in disco and I felt that by slowing them down they could change from a no wave band into more of a dance band." Such ideas produced Ze's "mutant disco", a pioneering hybrid of punk and dance.

Music and books have always been Zilkha's core passions. He grew up in London; his father founded Mothercare, but he didn't want to follow in his footsteps. After being "horribly bullied" at Westminster school, he found that listening to the Velvet Underground and David Bowie provided an escape. As a child, he had loved children's classical concerts, "because they kept the light on, so I could read".

After graduating from university, he left the country. "I stopped feeling English when I got to Oxford," says Zilkha. "I felt an undercurrent of antisemitism and, having been unhappy since the age of 12, I wanted to start again in an immigrant city. The British, and particularly their aristocracy, are fundamentally cruel in their humour. I also felt life would have been too circumscribed had I remained. I would have fallen into a comfortable but ultimately unsatisfying life."

Instead, he says, "I had the benefit of moving to New York in '75. I found CBGBs within three days and saw everything that was happening. I met [the Island Records founder] Chris Blackwell socially and told him to sign Talking Heads. He didn't, but the next time I saw a band" – the Contortions – "he gave me some money to record them and I was away."

After Zilkha interviewed John Cale for Interview, the Velvet Underground legend suggested they set up a small label. Spy Records was short-lived. "We fell out over Cristina's ironic single, Disco Clone," Zilkha says, referring to the US singer he later married (they divorced in 1990; she died in 2020). "Cristina wanted something Brechtian and John wanted Monster Mash." The schism meant Disco Clone ended up as the first release on Ze. Zilkha set up the label with Michel Esteban (the "E" in Ze). The Parisian boutique owner brought in Descloux; Was (Not Was), from Detroit, came via a recommendation from a jazz critic; and Zilkha "bumped into" August Darnell (AKA Kid Creole) in a studio.

Ze was edgy and glamorous. Artists would simply wander in. "I could only afford to sign people nobody else wanted, but I felt they were all incredibly talented. Everybody was scared of Suicide, but I couldn't believe they were unsigned. Dream Baby Dream was just sitting in a studio, because there was nobody to pay the bill."

Zilkha even coaxed his acts into making a festive album, A Christmas Record. "People like Lydia Lunch and [Suicide's] Alan Vega were not touchy-feely," says Chris Butler of the Waitresses, whose song Christmas Wrapping became a festive classic, "but everyone rose to the occasion." Meanwhile, the global success of Kid Creole and the Coconuts' album Tropical Gangsters paid off the label's $400,000 debt to the distributor, Island, within two months.

But things went awry. Zilkha and Esteban parted over a financial matter and the commercial failure of Cale's rapturously reviewed 1982 album Music for a New Society left Zilkha "gutted".

He signed Breakfast Club (including Stephen Bray, who later co-wrote some of Madonna's biggest hits), but the head of Island UK – Dave Robinson, better known as the boss of Stiff Records – said, in Zilkha's recollection: "I don't like this. You should put together a multicultural dance band." By Zilkha's reckoning, he already had the Coconuts: "Why do that again?" Then the Waitresses and the Coconuts decamped to major labels. "August's manager felt he should be on a 'proper label'," he sighs. "Once they're successful, they can go somewhere else for more money."

Zilkha left music, spending 18 months in publishing before helping his father, who had made a "disastrous investment" in oil and gas. In 1998, they sold their company, Zilkha Energy, for a reported $1bn – at which point he returned the Ze masters and publishing to the artists.

Zilkha says he isn't driven by money, but sees Ze Books as a "labour of love" to give again a platform to "out-of-the-ordinary voices". He is infectiously enthusiastic about Mary Gaitskill's memoir/literary hybrid The Devil's Treasure, poet Nick Flynn's powerful retrospective Stay, Jonathan Wells' moving body-image memoir The Skinny and the "forgotten but great journalist" Jon Bradshaw's The Ocean is Closed.

"Some of my happiest hours now are driving my granddaughter to school," he says, revealing that the in-car playlist includes old Ze delights such as Aural Exciters' Spooks in Space or the Waitresses' I Know What Boys Like. "But I'm 68. I'm much too young to just drive grandchildren to school."

Ze Books launches in the UK on 10 April. The War Is Here and Twist: An American Girl follow on 22 May.

PHOTOGRAPHS: MARTYN GODDARD/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK; ROBERTA BAYLEY/REDFERNS; ZE BOOKS; ANGIE COQUERAN/CORBIS/VCG/GETTY IMAGES; FOTEX/SHUTTERSTOCK


Will it be fourth time lucky for Kate Bush?

Hall of shame

The habitual sidelining of female artists shows that the 'Rock Hall' is broken, writes **Courtney Love**

I got into this business to write great songs and have fun. I was a quick learner. I read every music magazine and at 12 decided to base my personality on Lester Bangs, the rock critic raconteur; his belief in the transformative power of a great rock song matched mine. Artists shaped my life, my beliefs, my self-conception. But what no magazine or album could teach me was how exceptional you have to be as a woman to survive in the music business.

Chuck D rapped: "Elvis is a hero to most, but he doesn't mean shit to me." I concur. Big Mama Thornton first sang Hound Dog, written for her in 1952, which later put the King on the radio. Sister Rosetta Tharpe covered it, too. Her song Strange Things Happen Every Day was recorded in 1944. These songs, and her evangelical guitar playing, created what we now call rock'n'roll.

When the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame started in 1983, you would have thought they might want to begin with Sister Rosetta. The initial inductees were Chuck Berry, James Brown, Ray Charles, Little Richard, Sam Cooke, Fats Domino, the Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly, Jerry Lee Lewis and Elvis Presley; not a woman in sight. Sister Rosetta didn't get in until the Rock Hall was publicly shamed into adding her in 2018. Big Mama Thornton, whose recording of Ball'n'Chain also shaped this new form of music? Still not in. Today, just 8.48% of the inductees are women.

The nominations for this year's class, announced last month, offered the annual reminder of just how extraordinary a woman must be to make it into the ol' boys club. (Artists become eligible 25 years after releasing their first record.) More women were nominated in one year than at any time in its 40-year history. There were the iconoclasts: Kate Bush, Cyndi Lauper, Missy Elliott; two women in era-defining bands: Meg White of the White Stripes and Gillian Gilbert of New Order; and a woman who subverted the boys club: Sheryl Crow.

Yet this year's list featured several legendary women who have had to cool their jets waiting to be noticed. This was the fourth nomination for Bush. She became eligible in 2004. Never mind that she was the first woman to have written every track on a million-selling debut. A pioneer of synthesisers and music videos, she was discovered last year by a new generation when Running Up That Hill featured in Stranger Things. And yet there is no guarantee of her being a shoo-in this year. It took the Rock Hall 30-plus years to induct Nina Simone and Carole King. Tina Turner was inducted as a solo artist three decades after making the grade alongside her abuser, Ike.

Why are women so marginalised by the Rock Hall? Of the 31 people on the nominating board, just nine are women. According to the music historian Evelyn McDonnell, the Rock Hall voters are 90% male.

You can write the Rock Hall off and argue that it is building a totem to its own irrelevance. Why should we care? But the Rock Hall is a bulwark against erasure, which every female artist faces. It is a king-making force. Induction affects artists' ticket prices and the quality of their reissue campaigns. Particularly for veteran female artists, induction confers a status that directly affects the living they are able to make.

The bar is demonstrably lower for men. The Rock Hall recognised Pearl Jam about four seconds after they became eligible – and yet Chaka Khan, eligible since 2003, languishes with seven nominations. All is not lost, though – the Rock Hall is doing a special programme for Women's History Month on her stagewear …

The Rock Hall's canon-making doesn't just reek of sexist gatekeeping, but also purposeful ignorance and hostility. This year, one voter told Vulture magazine that they barely knew who Bush was. Meg White's potential induction as one half of the White Stripes has sparked openly contemptuous discourse. And still: she would be only the third female drummer in there, following the Go-Go's Gina Shock and Mo Tucker of the Velvet Underground. Where is Sheila E – eligible since 2001?

It doesn't look good for Black artists, either – the Beastie Boys were inducted in 2012 ahead of most of the Black hip-hop artists they learned to rhyme from. A Tribe Called Quest, eligible since 2010, were nominated last year and again this year, a roll of the dice against the white rockers they are forced to compete with.

If the Rock Hall is not willing to look at the ways it is replicating the violence of structural racism and sexism that artists face in the music industry, if it cannot properly honour what visionary women artists have contributed to popular music – well, then let it go to hell in a handbag.

‘There’s a politeness to Swedes. It’s a facade’

Brutes, creeps, weirdos – Alexander Sarsgård has played them all. As he stars in horror Infinity Pool and the last season of Succession, he lets out his primal scream to **Ryan Gilbey**

Alexander Skarsgård is an embarrassing creep who tries to coerce women into partying naked with him in hotel suites. Or so it would seem from the version of himself that he played last year in Donald Glover’s comedy Atlanta. “I’m not saying that I dance around in a leopard-print thong in front of girls I don’t know,” he says. “But I’m also not saying that I *don’t*. That kind of thing works really well when there’s a kernel of truth in it.”

This twinkling, teasing playfulness represents the default setting of the 46-year-old actor. His natural self-deprecation is what makes it so startling when he turns up on screen as another of the brutes and bastards that have become his speciality over the years. There was the violently abusive husband in the HBO series Big Little Lies and the violently abusive cop in War on Everyone; a racist in Passing and a rapist in the Straw Dogs remake, as well as a sad, moustachioed sleazeball who sleeps with his partner’s underage daughter in The Diary of a Teenage Girl. Eric, the vampire he played across all seven series of True Blood, was an absolute catch by comparison.

It could even be argued that Skarsgård looks lost or vague in those roles that don’t supply some darkness to temper his natural sheen. He was ferocious as a mud-caked proto-Hamlet in Robert Eggers’s wild Viking epic The Northman, but as the yodelling vine-swinger in The Legend of Tarzan, there was none of the usual depth present behind his beauty. Whereas his character in the new satirical horror Infinity Pool – directed by Brandon Cronenberg, son of David – is up to his disbelieving eyes in vanity, amorality and rancid privilege.

Skarsgård plays a novelist called James living off the wealth of his wife, Em (Cleopatra Coleman), and struggling to write a second book six years after his debut. In search of inspiration, he and Em visit a luxurious resort in an unnamed country. What begins as a taunting comedy about the awfulness of the 1% veers off into extremity when the couple fall in with the hedonistic Gabi (Mia Goth) and her partner, Alban (Jalil Lespert). All it takes for the impressionable James



With Mia Goth in Infinity Pool

EDGE STREET LIVE AND FRIENDS PRESENT

JOHN COOPER CLARKE
2023 UK TOUR
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
MIKE GARRY* & LUKE WRIGHT†
24 MARCH CAERPHILLY WORKMENS HALL† LAST FEW
20 APRIL BASILDON TOWNGATE THEATRE*
22 APRIL NORTHAMPTON SPINNEY THEATRE†
23 APRIL BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX† LAST FEW
25 APRIL CANTERBURY MARLOWE†
27 APRIL HARPENDEN ERIC MORECAMBE CENTRE† SOLD OUT
29 APRIL WARWICK ARTS CENTRE*
03 MAY LINCOLN THEATRE ROYAL
05 MAY KENDAL BREWERY ARTS* SOLD OUT
06 MAY BARROW FORUM* LAST FEW
09 MAY MIDDLESBROUGH TOWN HALL*
11 MAY BERWICK UPON TWEED MALTINGS* SOLD OUT
12 MAY DUNDEE GARDYNE THEATRE*
14 MAY GLASGOW CITY HALLS*
17 MAY KINGS LYNN GUILDHALL ARTS CENTRE†
18 MAY HULL CITY HALL*
19 MAY NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE* SOLD OUT
25 MAY CHELTENHAM TOWN HALL†
27 MAY TELFORD THEATRE†
02 JUNE BATH FORUM*
03 JUNE OXFORD PLAYHOUSE*
08 JUNE WORTHING PAVILION*
10 JUNE GUERNSEY BEAU SEJOUR HALL
Photo by Jody Hartley
johncooperclarke.com @ official_jcc

GRETCHEN PETERS
with Special Guest Kim Richey
FAREWELL TOUR 2023
03 May BELFAST The Mac SOLD OUT
04 May LYTHAM Lowther Pavilion
05 May GATESHEAD The Sage
06 May LIVERPOOL Philharmonic Hall
17 May BURY ST EDMUNDS The Apex
19 May BUXTON Opera House
20 May BIRMINGHAM Town Hall
21 May BEXHILL De La Warr Pavilion
23 May CARDIFF St Davids Hall
24 May SWINDON Wyvern Theatre
25 May EXETER Corn Exchange
26 May LONDON Cadogan Hall
@gretchenpeters
gretchenpeters.com
NEW ALBUM ON proper records THE SHOW OUT NOW
Produced by ESL by Arrangement with Moneypenny

Henry Normal
COLLECTED POEMS and other landfill
19 Mar BRIGHTON Komedia
23 Mar BELFAST Crescent Arts Centre
24 Mar BELLAGHY Home Place
26 Mar LAUGHARNE Weekend
04 April BURY The Met
05 April NEWCASTLE Wylam Brewery
06 April GLASGOW The Stand
14 April BRISTOL Folk House
15 April MONMOUTH The Savoy
29 April CORSHAM Pound Arts
10 May BLACKPOOL Bootleg Social
11 May NOTTINGHAM Lakeside
08 June BUXTON Pavilion Arts
09 June BARNARD CASTLE The Witham
10 June WORCESTER Huntingdon Hall
11 June CHORLEY Theatre
15 June WORTHING Festival
21 Sept POCKLINGTON Arts Centre
22 Sept MORECAMBE Poetry Festival
24 Sept SHEFFIELD The Leadmill
04 Oct LEEDS The Old Woollen
06 Oct HOLMFIRTH Civic Theatre
07 Oct HELMSLEY Arts Centre
21 Oct BARTON-ON-HUMBER Ropewalk
03 Nov DEVIZES Town Hall
@HENRYNORMALPOET @henrynormalpoetry
henrynormal.com

BRIAN BILSTON
07 May BELFAST CQAF Festival
26 May NOTTINGHAM Poetry Festival
10 June PAINSWICK Centre SOLD OUT
13 June CORSHAM Pound Arts SOLD OUT
15 June SWINDON Arts Centre
17 June BRISTOL Folk House SOLD OUT
07 July LONDON The Pleasance
21 July LONDON The Pleasance
20 Sept WORCESTER Huntingdon Hall
21 Sept SELBY Town Hall
22 Sept MORECAMBE Poetry Festival
23 Sept BUXTON Pavilion Arts
03 Oct MILTON KEYNES The Stables
04 Oct LYTHAM ST ANNE'S Lowther Pav
05 Oct KENDAL Brewery Arts
06 Oct CHORLEY Theatre
11 Oct SHEFFIELD The Leadmill
12 Oct SALE Waterside
18 Oct BANBURY Mill Arts Centre
19 Oct STAMFORD Corn Exchange
20 Oct POCKLINGTON Arts Centre LAST FEW
21 Oct LIVERPOOL Philharmonic Hall
22 Oct OTLEY Courthouse SOLD OUT
26 Oct CAERPHILLY Workmens Hall
27 Oct CRICKHOWELL Clarence Hall
28 Oct CLEVEDON Community Centre
01 Nov BRIGHTON Komedia
02 Nov DEAL Astor Theatre
08 Nov BELLAGHY Home Place
14 Nov COLCHESTER Arts Centre
15 Nov NORWICH Arts Centre LAST FEW
16 Nov SUDBURY Quay Theatre
22 Nov CHELTENHAM Town Hall
23 Nov FROME Cheese and Grain
24 Nov CHIPPENHAM The Neeld
25 Nov BRIDPORT Electric Palace
@brian_bilston brianbilston.com IN ASSOCIATION WITH SNG @brian_bilston

@EdgeStreetLive edgestreetlive.com

to be hooked by these reprobates is a few compliments from Gabi followed by a sex act shown in graphic detail. "My job is so hard," the actor says with a smirk.

Cronenberg and Skarsgård are both the sons of talented men. (Skarsgård's father is Stellan Skarsgård who, like him, is part of the Lars von Trier Cinematic Universe.) Director and actor also have a certain placid temperament in common. "There's a politeness to Canadians and Swedes," says Skarsgård. "But it's all just a facade. Deep down we're animals. We're just very good at concealing it." He gestures at me. "Brits, too. It's all down there, though. You can just open the tap and let it out. That's what this movie does."

Everything changes when James finds himself facing the death penalty after accidentally killing a local farmer. He is assured by the police that there is a way out: for a hefty price, a clone of him can be created to take the fall on his behalf. This is no dumb beast, however; the sacrificial lamb will possess all his memories and feelings. It will, in effect, be indistinguishable from him. In a film featuring explicit sex and violence, there is still nothing quite as unnerving as the moment James encounters his own double as it wakes with a shocked gasp in a vat of red goo.

"The film company gave me a prosthetic of the clone's face with all that goo round it," he says, shaking his head. "It's incredibly disturbing. What am I meant to do with it? Should I just hang it on the wall? Put it in the fridge?" He decided to go down the practical joke route. "When I have guests over, I'll hide it in different places around the house."

Questions of authenticity, dilution and duplication are especially intriguing for an actor who proposed that twisted alternate version of himself in Atlanta, and who claims to suffer even now from impostor syndrome. Had you been present in 2008 on the set of Generation Kill, the HBO Iraq war mini-series written by the creators of The Wire and shot in Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa, you might have noticed him sitting off to one side between takes, quietly totting up figures with a pen and paper. "It was my first big job," he explains. "I was so convinced they were going to fire me that I started calculating the cost of recasting the role once they realised I wasn't good enough. A month or two in, I was still convinced that every time the phone rang, it was my agent saying: 'Pack your bags, you're not cutting it.' It was only when we'd done some big battle scenes that I knew it would be too expensive to replace me."

'It's incredibly cathartic to play those roles' … Skarsgård



It wasn't as if he has a history of flunking, though there was the job in the Stockholm bakery that he was sacked from at the age of 16. "We were dipping little biscuits in chocolate for six hours a day in a basement and that was the only thing we got to do," he says pleadingly, as though mounting the case for his defence. "When you get chocolate on your fingers, it's tempting to put little stains on your buddy's white robes. That turned into a bit of a food fight." He smiles bashfully. Chocolate wouldn't melt in his mouth.

A few years earlier, he had abandoned a childhood acting career after feeling freaked out by all the attention he received. "When people recognised me, or I thought they did, it made me very uncomfortable. I also believed everything I heard about who I was. Most people at 13 have no idea who they are. I was going from a boy to a man, which is a crazy transformation anyway, but to do it while being in the spotlight was not healthy. That's why I didn't work for eight years." What could he learn now as an actor from his younger self? "There was a lot of joy," he says. "That makes me sound bitter now! But there was something innocent and lovely and wide-eyed. It's worth remembering that it can still be a big silly game."

"I'm not saying I don't dance around in a thong

His continuing appetite for comedy bears this out. He was a riot in the opening episode of On Becoming a God in Central Florida, where he played a dope who gets involved with a pyramid scheme before being eaten by an alligator. He also goofs around gloriously in the new season of Documentary Now!, in which he stars as a Werner Herzog-esque director shooting an epic in the Urals while simultaneously showrunning a US network comedy pilot called Bachelor Nanny. "I've met Herzog a few times over the years, but I don't know if he's seen this yet," he says, slightly sheepishly. "I'm curious to hear what he thinks."

It was in fact comedy that tempted Skarsgård back to acting again after all those years away. He was on holiday in Los Angeles in the early 00s when his father's agent suggested he try out for an audition. Six weeks later, he was pootling around New York in the back of a Jeep with Ben Stiller, pouting away happily as gormless Swedish model Meekus in Zoolander. Getting that job was such a breeze that he was crestfallen to be knocked back repeatedly in other Hollywood auditions. He returned to Sweden to continue acting; another six years elapsed before Generation Kill kickstarted his US career.

These days, he seems somehow both ubiquitous and judicious. He is getting ready to make his directorial debut with The Pack, in which he and Florence Pugh star as documentary-makers in Alaska. And he will return this month in the fourth and final season of Succession, which reportedly places even greater emphasis on Skarsgård's character, the tech bro Lukas Matsson. Another bad boy of sorts.

"Quite a few of the projects I've chosen deal with the juxtaposition of someone trying to function in modern society while also dealing with that atavistic primal question of who he is deep down and what happens when that flares up and can't be suppressed any longer," he says. "It's incredibly cathartic to play those roles. Maybe because I'm quite mellow in my disposition. These darker, more twisted characters give me an opportunity to howl that primal scream and let it out, which I rarely do in everyday life."

James in Infinity Pool has his head turned by the tiniest compliment; Skarsgård knows that, for all his own protestations about refusing to read what is written about him, he is just as susceptible to praise. "I really don't read reviews," he says. "That said, it's so nice when people enjoy your work enough to come say something or take a photo. I'd prefer that to the alternative, which is crawling around in the mud for seven months and giving it everything and then it's just … crickets. I like people appreciating what I've done. I'm a vain motherfucker!"

Infinity Pool is released on 24 March. The new series of Succession is on Sky Atlantic and NOW on 27 March.





In The Hummingbird; (right) with Brian Cox and Kieran Culkin in Succession

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHARLIE CLIFT; ALLSTAR; HBO



Peter Bradshaw's film of the week

Pearl



All hail the Judy Garland of horror

★★★★★

Dir *Ti West*

Starring *Mia Goth, David Corenswet, Tandi Wright*

102 mins **Cert** *15*

Mia Goth emerges as Hollywood's newest actual superstar: she is fiendishly good in this outrageous shocker, an origin-myth prequel to director Ti West's previous film, X, shot back-to-back on the same location. Goth starred in that but is now a co-writer on the followup; she takes her performance to the next level. Goth is now the Judy Garland of horror.

The film is horribly gripping, with golden-age movie pastiche and dashes of Psycho and The Wizard of Oz. West has led the way in commenting on a key issue - his film is about the pandemic, and how the lockdown experience incubates dysfunction and fear.

The year is 1918, some 60 years before the action of X. Goth plays the eponymous Pearl, a young woman working hard on the family farm in Texas, longing for the return of her husband Howard who is away fighting in Europe - and also dreaming of making it as a dancer in the movies. The war is coming to an end and the Spanish flu is almost over, although Pearl still has to wear a mask when she goes into town on errands.

But Pearl is deeply unhappy, and the lockdown has increased her disturbing behaviour. Her German-born first-generation immigrant mother (Tandi Wright) is obsessed with godly hard work and afraid to mix with the locals for fear of anti-German sentiment. She is strict with Pearl to the point of cruelty; Pearl's father (Matthew Sutherland) has suffered a stroke and has to be tended to constantly.

Pearl has a fling with the local town's movie projectionist (David Corenswet), who shows her one of his secret stash of explicit "stag" movies - a queasy premonition of the next film, X - and newsreels about the war that are moreover bizarrely explicit. He encourages Pearl to follow her dream, to break into pictures, and to that end attend local auditions for a touring dance troupe. But Pearl, her fingers always curling around the pitchfork handle, is not going to take kindly to rejection in any form.

Like X, this is virtually a single-location picture, although there are adroitly managed scenes when Pearl goes shopping, secretly swigging the morphine she buys for her dad. Goth and West contrive a genuinely brilliant scene when her sister-in-law thinks it would be cathartic for poor lonely Pearl to say to her what she is longing to say to her absent husband - and she gets a stream-of-consciousness aria of horror.

Perhaps I shouldn't have enjoyed Pearl as much as I did, but it's clever, limber, gruesome and brutally well acted. A gem.

Rye Lane

★★★☆☆

Dir *Raine Allen Miller*

Starring *Vivian Oparah, David Jonsson, Poppy Allen-Quarmby*

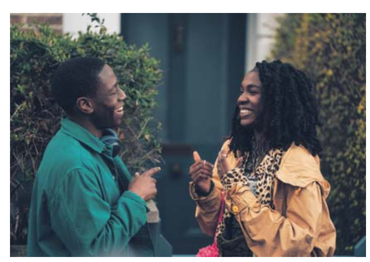
82 mins **Cert** *15*

Feature first-timer Raine Allen Miller directs this romcom urban-pastoral, goofing and freewheeling around the streets of south London with an almost childlike innocence. It is shot by Olan Collardy in rich colour with cartoony wide-angle streetscapes, and scripted by Nathan Bryon and Tom Melia. Unsubtle and on-the-nose though it undoubtedly is, there is also an amiable, upbeat energy.

Vivian Oparah plays Yas, a wannabe fashion designer who is in the gender-neutral lavatories at an exhibition when she overhears recently heartbroken Dom (David Jonsson) sobbing in one of the stalls; Dom's humiliation is completed when Yas asks him tentatively through the door if he's OK, then has to tell him this toilet is not, as he assumed, the "gents".

Yas and Dom find themselves strolling around cathartically together afterwards, while Yas opens up about the shortcomings of the man she recently broke up with. As for the luckless Dom, one of the problems was that he had hoped to surprise his girlfriend by placing chocolates in their bed, but they melted, leading to a highly unsexy misunderstanding. They hatch a plan to rescue one of Yas's favourite vinyl LPs, which her noisome ex still has at his flat, and of course this leads to more wackiness.

Admittedly there's not much in the way of nuance or realism here, but it has an engagingly unpretentious style.



Allelujah

★★★☆☆

Dir *Richard Eyre*

Starring *Jennifer Saunders, Judi Dench, David Bradley*

99 mins **Cert** *12A*

This gentle, shrewd ensemble comedy is adapted by screenwriter Heidi Thomas from the 2018 stage play by Alan Bennett, with a new Covid-aware coda bolted on to the end. Richard Eyre directs with a sure hand.

A small NHS geriatric hospital is facing closure from hardfaced Whitehall bean-counters who want giant glitzy "centres of excellence". Russell Tovey plays Colin, a Department of Health consultant with precisely these prejudices, who has to come and visit his ailing ex-miner dad Joe (David Bradley), a cantankerous old guy who has never been able to accept his son's identity as a gay man. There are no prizes for guessing if Colin's attitudes to both the hospital and his dad are going to thaw.

Elsewhere on the ward, Judi Dench plays Mary, a retired librarian with a passion for cataloguing rather than books, but a keen interest in marginalia: the readers' revealing scribbles at the side of the page. More genuinely bookish is Ambrose, the haughty former teacher (he prefers "schoolmaster") played by Derek Jacobi, who broods over the Charles Causley poem Ten Types of Hospital Visitor. Julia McKenzie is a woman with dementia whose daughter and son-in-law are desperate to keep her alive a few more months for inheritance tax reasons. And Jennifer Saunders is the formidable, no-nonsense ward sister with a secret.



This undemanding drama rolls along capably, enlivened by unmistakably Bennettian gags and drolleries every minute or so. The ostensible purpose of the film is of course to proclaim the value of the NHS, although you might argue that this faith is slightly deflected or undermined by the big narrative reveal, inspired by well-attested real life cases. But the new Covid section at the end, with its unexpected pivot to drama and crisis, works well enough. A low-key, attractive, if minor Alan Bennett.

Games



Resident Evil 4 Remake

PS4/5, Xbox Series S/X, PC

★★★★★

The original Resident Evil 4 represented a new phase in survival horror when it arrived on the Nintendo GameCube in 2005 to huge acclaim. Gone were the awkward expressionist camera angles and roving third-person perspective; gone too was the peculiarly staccato and unintuitive combat of the first three titles. Designer Shinji Mikami switched to an over-shoulder view, drawing the player into the protagonist's perspective and making the shoot-outs much more immersive. Gone too were the zombies, in favour of torch-wielding yokels and cult leaders.

The new version is much more than a visual update. Although it retains the narrative, characters and major locations of the original, the way each terrifying set-piece plays out has been radically remixed. And it is brilliant. The combat is expressive, tactical and tough, utilising a stripped down melee system, that allows for crucial ammo hoarding, while still making your character feel powerful. Every location is a rotting smörgåsbord of gelatinous horror. You explore scary rural areas where every shack has some snarling villager waiting to stab you; you explore gothic buildings, the walls lined with Renaissance paintings, the dining tables impeccably laid, each room housing a neat puzzle or a fresh enemy.

This is a beautiful, tense, camp, gory summation of everything that's good about Resident Evil. Whether you find yourself in a rose garden or torture dungeon, it is alive with intimate detail. It is a rich banquet, served amid the detritus of some horrible battle. Believe me, you will feast on it.

Keith Stuart



Alexis Petridis's album of the week

U2 Songs of Surrender



Miniaturised epics lose their widescreen appeal

Rock

Label Island/Interscope

★★★☆☆

U2 have always dealt in grand gestures. No other rock artists from the world of post-punk chased megastardom with the same missionary zeal: they seldom made any bones about wanting to be the biggest band in the world, something they duly achieved in grandstanding style. Their tours have involved everything from stage sets so big they required aircraft warning lights to prank calling the White House. Even when they screw up, it's on a monumental scale: the PopMart tour of 1998, with its malfunctioning 40ft motorised mirrorball - or was it a giant lemon? - that got stuck; the debacle of Songs of Innocence's unexpected appearance in 500 million iTunes users' libraries.

So perhaps it's unsurprising that what should theoretically be a low-key project - reworking their back catalogue in muted, largely acoustic style - has turned into an epic undertaking. Songs of Surrender is 40 tracks long and lasts the best part of three hours. So much for understatement. Neither a greatest hits nor a selection of deep cuts, its title suggests a link to Bono's recent autobiography, Surrender, its 40 chapters each named after a U2 song - but that's not quite the case. Picked by all four members, 11 of Songs of Surrender's tracks don't appear in Bono's book. The main takeaway from its tracklisting is that U2 think Songs of Innocence was underrated: it has a stronger presence here than any other album.

The record's conceptual shakiness is less of an issue than its unwieldiness. Given the album's self-imposed sonic parameters (largely piano, guitar and synth washes; little in the way of drums), it struggles to hold your attention. Taken in smaller doses, there are great moments marked by a sense of genuine reinvention: a fantastic, brass-assisted take on The Joshua Tree's Red Hill Mining Town; a version of Every Breaking Wave that supports the band's point about early single 11 O'Clock Tick Tock stripped back to make the power of the melody more obvious.

The last also features one of Songs of Surrender's most intriguing sounds: that of the Edge adapting guitar parts influenced by PiL's Keith Levene, and heavily dependent on echo and signal processing, to a more straightforward acoustic sound. The best example comes



with Achtung Baby's The Fly, which eschews the original's feedback-strafed sound for loose, organic funk decorated with eerie backing vocals. It's run close by Desire, ripping out the original's muscular heft, leaving a falsetto vocal treated with effects: it suddenly sounds like a song about being weak with love, about a clinging desperation.

But Desire and The Fly are the exceptions that prove Songs of Surrender's basic rule. For the most part, the biggest songs don't work rendered in soft-focus miniature - their widescreen ambitions an integral part of their appeal. At best they sound pleasantly inessential and at worst their hushed ambience sounds like cover versions commissioned for a bank advert. It's certainly more fun hearing tracks excavated from the recesses and reconsidered - Zooropa's Dirty Day; How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb's lovely Miracle Drug - than listening to U2 struggling to work out what to do with Vertigo and Get Out of Your Own Way.

Neither a disaster on the level of their iTunes launch, nor a triumph to match Zoo TV, Songs of Surrender sits somewhere in the middle. It might have been more satisfying if U2 had stuck to digging through the more recherche corners of their catalogue, or reworked music they felt was underdone first time around. Instead, their rushed second album October and 2009's coolly received No Line on the Horizon are ignored and only bassist Adam Clayton picks a track from 1997's derided Pop. But then, without the hits and the lyrical tweaks to update celebrated songs - Walk On altered to reference Ukraine rather than Aung San Suu Kyi; Pride appended to mention Alan Kurdi - Songs of Surrender would have seemed less grand a gesture: less U2.

More reviews at theguardian.com/music

Folk album of the month

Artist Lankum

Album False Lankum

Label Rough Trade

★★★★★



Teeming with moments of iridescent bliss, the 12 tracks on the Dublin band's fourth album unfurl into each other without a break, alternately lulling the listener then casting them into storms of shuddering sounds. It begins with Radie Peat, the best folk singer of our times, instructing us to Go Dig My Grave. When she sings she magically straddles realities, sounding both like an uncompromising everywoman and a mystical instrument of bellows and reeds - a magic she employs to spiritual effect on the beautiful 17th-century ballad Newcastle. Then there's their version of Master Crowley's, a menacing concertina reel that sounds precision-tooled to jar devils awake.

On recent form, Lankum could have become a hardcore drone band, but they've done something braver by allowing their gentler sides a bold voice in the mix, without diluting their power. They remain a radical band while making music that is reaching out to the mainstream - and also giving off the thrilling sense that there is so much more to come. **Jude Rogers**

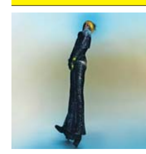
Pop

Artist Yves Tumor

Album Praise a Lord Who Chews But Which Does Not Consume; (Or Simply, Hot Between Worlds)

Label Warp Records

★★★★☆



Yves Tumor began as a murky sound collagist dwelling in the underbelly of electronic music. Now they're an extravagant bandleader inching towards alt-pop superstardom, their sound twisting and branching between splintered ambient, R&B, noise, funk, grunge and more. On Praise a Lord … they share some of their catchiest and most openly introspective songwriting yet. It hinges on Heaven Surrounds Us Like a Hood, its heart-wrenching lyricism on childhood, spirituality and id unfurling alongside downcast melodies that blossom into something anthemic. Whether they're running away from or towards something, Tumor remains one step ahead of the rest. **Tayyab Amin**

Classical

Artist Quatuor Diotima

Album Ligeti: Metamorphoses

Label Pentatone

★★★★★



György Ligeti's two numbered string quartets belong stylistically to strikingly different phases of his career. The First was begun in 1953, when Ligeti was in his native Hungary, where socialist realism had been the rule for composers since the communist takeover; by the time he came to write the Second he was based in western Europe, having left during the uprising of 1956. Heard in succession, the quartets demonstrate where the mature works came from, and the newly minted musical world which they then inhabited. Both make enormous technical and musical demands, and the performances by the Quatuor Diotima meet their challenges with more accuracy and brilliance than any I've heard before. Every detail of the string writing is crystal clear, the shape of each movement utterly lucid. **Andrew Clements**



Zaghari-Ratcliffe reunited with her daughter, Gabriella, at the airport

Review Nazanin, Channel 4

This incredibly moving film will also fill you with rage

★★★★☆

Leila Latif



Watching Nazanin, the documentary that chronicles Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe's imprisonment in Iran and the fight to bring her home, is an emotional rollercoaster. The dedication of her husband, Richard, who campaigned to free her, the reunions with their daughter, Gabriella, and the hunger strikes that Richard and Nazanin endured are incredibly moving. But, as the 75-minute film draws to a close, one emotion surpasses all others: this film will make you furious.

Journalist-turned-director Darius Bazargan, best known for The Great Game: Iran versus USA, had intimate access to the family and shows them talking lovingly on the phone, Gabriella's birthday celebrations and fruitless Zoom meetings with Dominic Raab, the then foreign secretary. This is intercut with interviews, and the well-circulated footage of her arrest and the family's eventual tearful reunion. Zaghari-Ratcliffe narrates scenes, reading aloud letters to her daughter. Much of what she says is incredibly painful to hear. Images of her in a blissful cocoon of new motherhood are shown as she recalls the overwhelming joy of Gabriella's birth and reflects sorrowfully: "My darling daughter. Those sweet and beautiful days didn't last long. A trip to Iran in 2016 when you were 22 months was one of no return."

Even though this story is familiar, kept in the public eye throughout her imprisonment through her husband's dedication, the film still has the power to shock. Footage of her disbelief as she is arrested at the Iranian airport takes on the feeling of a horror film. Her mouth is agape as an unseen man explains: "I am from the prosecutor's office and I'm here to inform you that you are banned from leaving the country. We have an order for your arrest." Zaghari-Ratcliffe and her husband seem to be in denial at first, convinced this is a mistake that will be quickly resolved, which makes it all the more terrible knowing what lies ahead. Sweet moments on the phone in the first few weeks where Richard coos that he's "all the better for hearing your voice" give way to chilling cruelty as we watch him take in that her sentence is "five years" – and all the more devastating knowing that it will, in fact, be just under six.

But sadness gives way to anger, as it becomes clear that Zaghari-Ratcliffe is not a prisoner but "a hostage". She spends the first 10 days in solitary confinement wearing the same clothes in which she was arrested; her husband relays that her food was drugged, her family were threatened and she was kept in a cycle of "interrogation, isolation, interrogation, isolation". The torture of an innocent woman is hard to digest, particularly as the film shows her as a pawn in a larger game between the UK and Iran.

More infuriating still is the glibness with which her story is reported in Iran. She is shown as the answer on television quizshows to questions such as: "Which one of these people is a British spy?"

But perhaps what provokes most rage is the actions of the British government. It is well known that when Boris Johnson was foreign secretary he falsely stated that Nazanin was "simply teaching people journalism" rather than visiting her family. Richard almost screams that this was "fucking outrageous" as he was aware how that would be used against her in Iran. But what is truly shocking is the film's depiction of how obstructive the British government was in the attempts to free her. The blame is placed squarely at its feet, and its refusal to pay the £400m debt from a decades-old arms deal. Richard seems utterly disillusioned by the government's stated intention to get Zaghari-Ratcliffe home, claiming: "All the government has done is deflect attention away from their failure to pay the debt." By the midway point of the documentary, as Zaghari-Ratcliffe's voice is heard saying, "I am losing my faith in humanity", it's hard not to feel the same way.

Anyone with even a cursory knowledge of the case will be aware that Zaghari-Ratcliffe did eventually make it home and that, after a deal for the UK to pay what it owed to Iran, she and another British-Iranian detainee, Anoosheh Ashoori, were reunited with their loved ones on British soil. But the documentary offers little respite in these moments. The injustice this family suffered is overwhelming, and the inaction of those who could have helped sooner is horrific and they must be held to account. As a call to arms to fight for those who are still being held hostage around the world, this film is a reminder that love is an incredible motivator, but anger may prove just as potent.

Redemption
9pm, ITV



Another week, another weathered DI to get acquainted with. This time it's a six-parter about Colette Cunningham (Paula Malcomson, *above*). While out on the beat in her Liverpool stomping ground, she gets a call from the Dublin Garda Síochána, who inform her of her estranged daughter Stacey's suicide. Colette also learns that she has two teenage grandchildren, and so, in a "highly unusual" situation, swaps Liverpool for Dublin for six months to find out what has happened.

Hollie Richardson

Comic Relief 2023
7pm, BBC One
A cloak from The Traitors is one of the TV items you can bid on as part of his year's fundraising marathon (along with Pat Butcher's earrings). Elsewhere, Gethin Jones is finishing his sponsored 24-hour dance challenge, with plenty of Strictly stars on hand to help. **HR**

Gardeners' World
8pm, BBC Two
It's a reliable sign of the changing seasons when the first Gardeners' World of spring comes into bloom. While Monty Don busies himself with pruning roses and planting clematis, Carol Klein visits a skateboarder's garden in Sheffield and Adam Frost discovers which plants will be best suited to survive the changing climate. **Ellen E Jones**

Becoming Frida Kahlo
9pm, BBC Two
The second instalment of Kahlo's life story finds her fighting for her independence in the face of Diego Rivera's affairs. In the early 1930s, Kahlo is shocked by the poverty in New York, while she and Rivera are surrounded by high society. But, as she loses her baby, the pain shows in her art. **Hannah Verdier**

When Comic Relief Did Big Brother
10pm, BBC Two
Chris Eubank entered the house on a scooter while wearing a kaftan. Vanessa Feltz had a very public meltdown. And, whether or not it was for charity, the pioneering reality TV format showed it was going to run and run. This documentary looks back at the roots of the small-screen phenomenon of the 00s. **Phil Harrison**

The Last Leg
10pm, Channel 4
Nish Kumar and Fern Brady can both be counted on to make an entertaining appearance wherever they go, so this week's takedown of the news – which includes Jeremy Hunt's budget and the aftermath of certain WhatsApp messages – will be a good'un. **HR**

What's On
Scan the QR code below to sign up for the What's On newsletter, our free TV email with the best reviews, news and exclusive writing direct to your inbox every Monday

BBC One

6.0 **Breakfast** (T) **9.15** Morning Live (T) **10.0** Crimewatch Live (T) **10.45** Critical Incident (T) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer (T) (R) **12.15** Bargain Hunt (T) (R) **1.0** News (T) **1.30** Regional News and Weather (T) **1.45** Hope Street (T) (R) **2.30** The Repair Shop (T) **3.0** Escape to the Country (T) (R) **3.45** Antiques Road Trip (T) **4.30** Bridge of Lies (T) (R) **5.15** Pointless (T) (R) **6.0** News (T) **6.30** Regional News and Weather (T)

7.0 **Comic Relief 2023** (T) An evening of comedy and entertainment for charity. David Tennant presents with Paddy McGuinness, Zoe Ball, Joel Dommett and AJ Odudu, plus comic duo Flo and Joan, Oti Mabuse and Rylan Clark on their Cairngorms trip, and Gethin Jones on his 24-hour dance challenge.

10.0 **News** (T)
10.30 **Regional News** (T) Weather
10.40 **Comic Relief: The Best of the Best Bits** (T) Highlights from 35 years of Red Nose Day.
11.40 FILM **The Peanut Butter Falcon** (2019) (T) Adventure, starring Shia LaBeouf and Zachary Gottsagen.
1.10 **Six Nations Sin Bin** (T) **1.40** Weather (T) **1.45** News (T)

BBC Two

6.30 **Escape to the Country** (T) (R) **7.15** Antiques Road Trip (T) (R) **8.0** Sign Zone: Gardeners' World (T) (R) **9.0** News (T) **12.15** Politics UK (T) **1.0** Impossible (T) (R) **1.45** Eggheads (T) (R) **2.45** Hairy Bikers' Best of British (T) (R) **3.30** Land of the Lost Wolves (T) (R) **4.30** Priceless Antiques Roadshow (T) (R) **5.0** Flog It! (T) (R) **6.0** Richard Osman's House of Games (T) (R) **6.30** Coast to Coast Food Festival (T) **7.0** Saving Lives at Sea (T) (R)

8.0 **Gardeners' World** (T) New series. Monty Don and the team offer horticultural tips from their base in his garden in Hertfordshire.
9.0 **Becoming Frida Kahlo** (T) Frida and Diego travel to San Francisco where he has a mural commission, but Frida is determined to succeed in her own right.

10.0 **When Comic Relief Did Big Brother** (T)
10.35 **Newsnight** (T) Weather
11.10 **MOTDx** (T) (R)
11.40 **Couples Therapy** (T)
12.05 **Dave** (T) (R) **1.05** Sign Zone: Cops, Cash and Fraudsters (T) (R) **1.35** Parole (T) (R) **2.35** Our Flag Means Death (T) (R) **3.0** My Grandad's War (R) **4.0** This Is BBC Two (T)

ITV

6.0 **Good Morning Britain** (T) **9.0** Lorraine (T) **10.0** This Morning (T) **12.30** News and Weather (T) **12.50** Local News and Weather (T) **1.0** Racing: Cheltenham Festival Live (T) **4.30** Tipping Point: Best Ever Finals (T) **5.0** The Chase (T) (R) **6.0** Local News and Weather (T) **6.30** News (T) **7.30** Emmerdale (T)

8.0 **Coronation Street** (T) Stephen lets himself into Carla's flat while she sleeps.
9.0 **Redemption** (T) New series. Plain-speaking Liverpool detective DI Colette Cunningham moves to Dublin when her daughter's dead body is found in the Irish capital. Crime drama, with Paula Malcomson.

10.0 **News** (T) Weather
10.30 **Local News** (T) Weather
10.45 FILM **The 40 Year-Old Virgin** (Judd Apatow, 2005) (T) Comedy, starring Steve Carell and Catherine Keener.
1.0 **Shop: Ideal World** **3.0** The Jonathan Ross Show (T) (R) **3.55** Unwind With ITV (T) **5.05** Ainsley's Fantastic Flavours (T) (R)

Channel 4

6.10 **Countdown** (T) (R) **6.50** 3rd Rock from the Sun (T) (R) **7.40** The King of Queens (T) (R) **9.0** Frasier (T) (R) **10.30** Undercover Boss USA (T) (R) **11.25** News (T) **11.30** Emergency Helicopter Medics (T) **12.30** Steph's Packed Lunch (T) **2.10** Countdown (T) **3.0** Tool Club (T) **4.0** A New Life in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** Four in a Bed (T) **5.30** Come Dine With Me (T) **6.0** The Simpsons (T) (R) **6.30** Hollyoaks (T) (R) **7.0** News (T)

8.0 **Highclere: Behind the Scenes** (T) (R) Documentary following life at Highclere Castle, best known as the setting for Downton Abbey. Lady Carnarvon becomes an unexpected tour guide for some Americans.
9.0 **Gogglebox** (T) The armchair critics share their thoughts on the best of the week's TV.

10.0 **The Last Leg** (T)
11.05 **The Inbetweeners** (T) (R) The friends decide to play truant.
11.40 **The Inbetweeners** (T) (R) Simon passes his driving test.
12.10 **Friday Night Dinner** (T) (R) **1.05** Derry Girls (T) (R) **2.0** GameFace (T) (R) **2.55** The Simpsons (T) (R) **3.20** Come Dine With Me (R) **5.35** Keep Cooking and Carry On (T) (R)

Channel 5

6.0 **Milkshake!** **9.15** Jeremy Vine (T) **12.45** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (T) (R) **1.40** News (T) **1.45** Home and Away (T) (R) **2.15** FILM Fatal Mother's Retreat (Jane T Higgins, 2021) (T) **4.0** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun (T) (R) **5.0** News (T) **6.0** Big Road Rescue: Emergency Call Out (T) (R) **7.0** Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders (T) (R)

8.0 **Motorway: Hell on the Highway** (T) One motorist goes airborne following an encounter with a roundabout.
9.0 **Amazing Railway Adventures With Nick Knowles** (T) Travelling north from Trondheim, Norway, Nick stays for a night on the Namsen river.

10.0 **Draining the Thames: Secrets Revealed** (T) (R)
11.0 FILM **The Fifth Element** (Luc Besson, 1997) (T) Sci-fi adventure, starring Bruce Willis and Milla Jovovich.
1.25 **The Live Casino Show** (T) **3.25** Tutankhamun With Dan Snow (T) (R) **5.05** The Railways That Built Britain (T) (R) **5.55** Peppa Pig (T) (R)

BBC Four

7.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1994, with Iggy Pop, Michael Bolton and Gloworm **7.30** Top of the Pops (T) (R) From 1994, featuring 2 Unlimited.

8.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1982, including Gary Numan, Japan and Classix Nouveaux.
8.30 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) From 1987, with Mel & Kim, Bruce Willis, the Mission, Erasure, Genesis and Boy George.
9.0 **Phil Lynott: Songs for While I'm Away** (T) (R) The life and music of the Thin Lizzy frontman.

10.30 **Sight & Sound in Concert: Thin Lizzy** (T) (R) A gig from January 1983, including Jailbreak, The Boys Are Back in Town and Rosalie.
11.05 **Irish Rock at the BBC** (T) (R) A compilation of Irish rock performances.
12.0 **Top of the Pops** (T) (R) **2.0** Phil Lynott: Songs for While I'm Away (T) (R)

Other channels

BBC Three

7.0pm Top Gear **7.55** The Catch Up **8.0** Glow Up: Britain's Next Make-Up Star **9.0** FILM The Bling Ring (2013) **10.25** Tonight With Target **11.10** Jerk **11.35** Jerk **12.0** Go Hard Or Go Home **3.0** Brickies **3.30** Jerk

Dave

6.0am Teleshopping **7.10** Driving Wars **8.0** Cop Car Workshop **9.0** The Force: Behind the Line **10.0** Australian Ninja Warrior **11.30** Rick Stein's Far Eastern Odyssey **12.30** The Force: Behind the Line **1.0** Cop Car Workshop **2.0** Top Gear **3.0** Top Gear **4.0** Australian Ninja Warrior **5.30** Travel Man: 48 Hours in Budapest **6.0** Taskmaster **7.0** Richard Osman's House of Games **7.40** Room 101 **8.20** Would I Lie to You? **9.0** QI **10.0** QI **11.0** Taskmaster **12.0** Mock the Week **12.40** QI XL **1.20** Hypothetical **2.15** Comedians Giving Lectures **2.45** Perfect **3.20** The Best of Famalam **4.0** Teleshopping

E4

6.0am Hollyoaks **6.30** Hollyoaks **7.0** Ramsay's Hotel Hell **8.0** Ramsay's Hotel Hell **9.0** Married at First Sight Australia **10.30** The Big Bang Theory **11.0** Modern Family **11.30** Modern Family **12.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **12.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.0** The Big Bang Theory **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **2.0** The Big Bang Theory **2.30** The Big Bang Theory **3.0** Modern Family **3.30** Modern Family **4.0** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **4.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **5.0** The Big Bang Theory **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.0** The Big Bang Theory **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.0** Hollyoaks **7.30** The Farmer Wants a Wife: Australia **9.0** FILM Hitman: Agent 47 (2015) **10.55** Naked Attraction **11.55** Naked Attraction **1.0** Gogglebox **2.0** The Farmer Wants a Wife: Australia **3.20** Ramsay's Hotel Hell **4.10** Ramsay's Hotel Hell **5.0** The Goldbergs **5.25** The Goldbergs

Film4

11.0am FILM To Hell and Back (1955) **1.10** FILM The Court-Martial of Billy Mitchell (1955) **3.15** FILM Elephant Walk (1954) **5.20** FILM It Came from Beneath the Sea (1954) **6.55** FILM Maid in Manhattan (2002) **9.0** FILM Terminator: Dark Fate (2019) **11.35** FILM Four Lions (2010) **1.40** FILM 24 Hour Party People (2002)

ITV2

6.0am World's Funniest Videos **6.35** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **7.0** Love Bites **8.0** Dress to Impress **9.0** Chuck **10.0** One Tree Hill **11.0** The OC **12.0** Love Bites **1.0** Dress to Impress **2.0** Supermarket Sweep **3.05** Chuck **4.0** One Tree Hill **5.0** The OC **6.0** Catchphrase Celebrity Special **7.0** The Masked Singer US **8.0** Superstore **9.0** Loaded in Paradise **10.0** Family Guy **10.30** Family Guy **11.0** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.30** Superstore **1.0** Superstore **1.30** CelebAbility **2.20** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.45** Unwind With ITV **3.0** Teleshopping

Sky Max

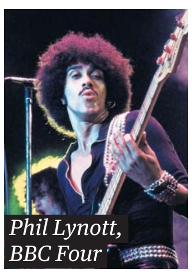
6.0am Stargate SG-1 **7.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **9.0** Quantum Leap **10.0** Supergirl **11.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **12.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **1.0** Hawaii Five-0 **2.0** S.W.A.T **3.0** Quantum Leap **4.0** DC's Legends of Tomorrow **5.0** Supergirl **6.0** Stargate SG-1 **7.0** Stargate SG-1 **8.0** Strike Back: Shadow Warfare **9.0** A League of Their Own Road Trip: Southeast Asia **10.0** Fantasy Football League **10.35** Seal Team **11.35** Banshee **12.35** The Force: North East **1.30** Road Wars **2.0** NCIS: Los Angeles **3.0** Hawaii Five-0 **4.0** S.W.A.T **5.0** Highway Patrol **5.30** Highway Patrol

Sky Arts

6.0am Darbar Festival 2022 **7.15** La Dolce Vita: The Music of Italian Cinema **9.0** Tales of the Unexpected **9.30** Tales of the Unexpected **10.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **10.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.0** Discovering: Frances McDormand **12.0** Thomas Hardy: Fate, Exclusion and Tragedy **1.0** Tales of the Unexpected **1.30** Tales of the Unexpected **2.0** My Greatest Shot: Street **2.30** My Greatest Shot: Animals **3.0** Landscape Artist of the Year 2019 **4.0** Discovering: Meg Ryan **5.0** Tales of the Unexpected **5.30** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **6.0** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **6.30** The Chieftains: Water from the Well - Live Over Ireland **7.50** Fleetwood Mac: Live in Boston **9.0** Women Who Rock **10.15** Guy Garvey: From the Vaults **11.15** Gary Numan Resurrection **1.0** New Order: Decades **3.0** Brian Johnson's A Life on the Road **4.0** Classic Albums **5.0** Music Icons: The New Orleans Sound **5.30** Video Killed the Radio Star

Sky Atlantic

6.0am Fish Town **7.55** The Affair **10.0** Gomorrah **12.05** Game of Thrones **1.10** The Leftovers **3.30** Gomorrah **4.35** Succession **6.50** Yellowjackets **7.55** Game of Thrones **9.0** Succession **10.15** Christian **11.20** The Wire **1.40** The Leftovers **2.50** Game of Thrones **4.0** Fish Town



Phil Lynott, BBC Four

Radio

Radio 3

6.30am Breakfast **9.0** Essential Classics **12.0** Composer of the Week: Purcell (R) **1.0** Lunchtime Concert. Quatuor Van Kuijk play Poulenc's 3 Mélodies (arr Jean-Christophe Masson), Laurent Durupt's Grids for Greed and Debussy's String Quartet. (R) **2.0** Afternoon Concert. The Ulster Orchestra play Louise Farrenc's Symphony No 3. Plus, concertos by Ravel and Stravinsky from pianist Steven Osborne and violinist Leonidas Kavakos. **4.30** The Listening Service (R) **5.0** In Tune **7.0** Classical Mixtape **7.30** In Concert. Lionel Bringuier conducts the BBC Symphony Orchestra and violinist Akiko Suwanai in Debussy's Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune, Dutilleux's L'Arbre des Songes, Roussel's Le Festin de L'Araignée, Op 17 and Ravel's La Valse. **10.0** The Verb (R) **10.45** The Essay: Lundy, Fastnet, Irish Sea - Wales and Its Coastal Waters (5/5) **11.0** Late Junction: With Shackleton and MC Yallah in session (R) **1.0** Composed With Devonté Hynes **2.0** Piano Flow With Tokio Myers (R) **3.0** Through the Night

Radio 4

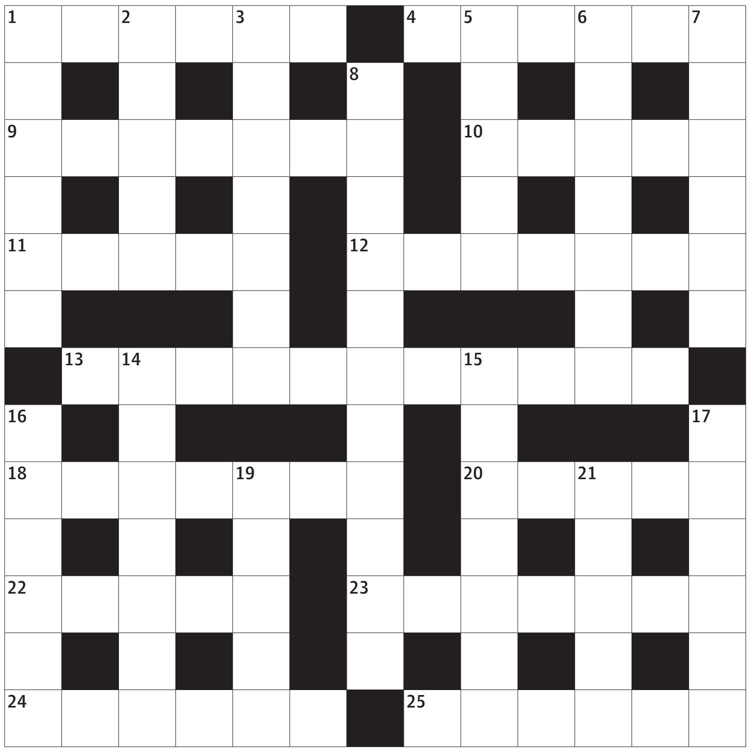
6.0am Today **8.31** (LW) Yesterday in Parliament **9.0** Desert Island Discs (R) **9.45** (LW) Daily Service **9.45** (FM) Book of the Week: Breaking Mississippi (5/10) **10.0** Woman's Hour **11.0** The Battle for Liberal Democracy. The complex international contest between democracy and its enemies. (1/3) **11.30** Lemn Sissay Is the One and Only. The poet on being the only Black man in the village. (3/4) **12.0** News **12.01** (LW) Shipping Forecast **12.04** AntiSocial (10/12) **12.57** Weather **1.0** The World at One **1.45** Shock and War: Iraq 20 Years On. As the clock ticks down, Tony Blair's options begin to run out. (5/10) **2.0** The Archers (R) **2.15** Boswell's Lives: Boswell's Life of De Beauvoir. Comedy, by Jon Canter. (R) **2.45** Understand: The Economy (R) **3.0** Gardeners' Question Time **3.45** Sunil Patel: An Idiot's Guide to Cryptocurrency. Sunil tries to take the crypto art space by storm. (R) **4.0** Last Word **4.30** Feedback (2/4) **5.0** PM **5.54** (LW) Shipping Forecast **5.57** Weather **6.0** News **6.30** The Now Show. Sketches with Steve Punt and Hugh Dennis. (1/6) **7.0** The Archers **7.15** Add to Playlist (6/8) **8.0** Any Questions? **8.50** A Point of View **9.0** Frankenstein Lives! (R) **9.59** Weather **10.0** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime (5/10) **11.0** Americast (10/12) **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.0** News **12.30** Breaking Mississippi (R) **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.0** As World Service **5.20** Shipping Forecast **5.30** News **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45** Lent Talks (R)

Radio 4 Extra

6.0am The Toff and the Runaway Bride (5/6) **6.30** Stand By for West (7/7) **7.0** Golden Child (10/10) **7.15** Blowing the Bloody Doors Off (5/5) **7.30** The Wilsons Save the World (3/4) **8.0** Mr Willow's Wife (6/6) **8.30** Babblewick Hall (2/6) **9.0** Act Your Age (4/6) **9.30** Bleak Expectations (6/6) **10.0** The Mystery of the Yellow Room **11.0** The Toff and the Runaway Bride (5/6) **11.30** Stand By for West (7/7) **12.0** Golden Child (10/10) **12.15** Blowing the Bloody Doors Off (5/5) **12.30** The Wilsons Save the World (3/4) **1.0** Mr Willow's Wife (6/6) **1.30** Babblewick Hall (2/6) **2.0** Act Your Age (4/6) **2.30** Bleak Expectations (6/6) **3.0** The Mystery of the Yellow Room **4.0** The Toff and the Runaway Bride (5/6) **4.30** Stand By for West (7/7) **5.0** Golden Child (10/10) **5.15** Blowing the Bloody Doors Off (5/5) **5.30** The Wilsons Save the World (3/4) **6.0** Mr Willow's Wife (6/6) **6.30** Babblewick Hall (2/6) **7.0** Act Your Age (4/6) **7.30** Bleak Expectations (6/6) **8.0** Food in the Frame **8.30** Soul Music (4/4) **9.0** The Distant Echo **10.0** Comedy Club: The Ultimate Choice (4/6) **10.30** Beauty of Britain (2/6) **11.0** John Kearns (3/4) **11.15** Poets' Tree (3/4) **11.30** Listen Against (2/4) **12.0** Doctor Who: The War Doctor (13/16) **12.36** Mysterious Tales By Wilkie Collins **1.0** The Mystery of the Yellow Room **2.0** The Toff and the Runaway Bride (5/6) **2.30** Stand By for West (7/7) **3.0** Golden Child (10/10) **3.15** Blowing the Bloody Doors Off (5/5) **3.30** The Wilsons Save the World (3/4) **4.0** Mr Willow's Wife (6/6) **4.30** Babblewick Hall (2/6) **5.0** Act Your Age (4/6) **5.30** Bleak Expectations (6/6)

Puzzles

Quick crossword no 16,493



Across
1 Non-official opinion(s) (6)
4 Impassivity (6)
9 Chilling container (7)
10 Meat cut into strips and dried in the sun (5)
11 Extremist (5)
12 Period when the sea is receding (3,4)
13 The "how to" (11)
18 Swine leather (7)
20 Modern witchcraft (5)
22 Enraged (5)
23 Garment worn by ballet dancers and acrobats (7)
24 Rider's seat (6)
25 Carnal (6)

Down
1 Reflex spasm of the diaphragm (6)
2 Place where birds regularly settle at night (5)
3 Sunday (for Christians), Saturday (for Jews) and Friday (for Muslims) (7)
5 Headscarf worn by Muslim women (5)
6 Angrier (anag) - item of jewellery (7)
7 Chaos (6)
8 Very much (11)
14 Albion (7)
15 Contemptible (3-4)
16 Study of the behaviour of light (6)
17 Casual shoe (6)
19 Bend the knee (5)
21 State to be true (5)

Stuck? For help call 0906 200 83 83. Calls cost £1.10 per minute, plus your phone company's access charge. Service supplied by ATS. Call 0330 333 6946 for customer service (charged at standard rate).To buy puzzle books, visit guardianbookshop.com or call 0330 333 6846.

Sudoku no 5,995

Hard. Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9.

7								9
			3	5	2			
		9				7		
5			8		7			4
			6	3	4			
8								2
		4	7		6	1		
	7	1				8	5	

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each square in an outlined block contains a digit. A block of 2 squares contains the digits 1 and 2, a block of three squares contains the digits 1, 2 and 3, and so on. No same digit appears in neighbouring squares, not even diagonally.

			3		3
				2	
3	4			1	
		1			
1					2

Wordsearch

Can you find 16 Scottish names in the grid? Words can run forwards, backwards, vertically or diagonally, but always in a straight, unbroken line.

F	G	Y	T	S	R	I	K	H
I	A	B	M	G	A	V	I	N
O	R	A	F	U	D	L	A	K
N	O	N	N	V	R	C	S	B
A	M	O	T	G	N	R	O	I
A	U	I	E	U	U	N	A	C
N	R	R	D	I	N	S	R	Y
O	I	T	E	I	L	A	T	N
H	E	A	E	E	I	S	A	S
R	L	C	T	G	E	W	E	H
E	A	N	D	R	E	W	L	L

Yesterday's solutions

Sudoku no 5,994

2	5	6	7	8	4	3	1	9
7	8	9	3	2	1	4	6	5
4	3	1	9	5	6	2	8	7
6	1	4	5	3	9	8	7	2
3	9	2	4	7	8	6	5	1
5	7	8	1	6	2	9	3	4
1	2	5	8	9	3	7	4	6
9	4	3	6	1	7	5	2	8
8	6	7	2	4	5	1	9	3

Suguru

4	3	1	5	3	1
2	5	4	2	4	2
1	3	1	3	1	5
2	4	2	5	2	3
3	1	3	1	4	5
2	4	5	2	3	1

Wordsearch

F	C	T	I	U	S	T	E	W
H	I	O	F	P	E	K	B	V
O	S	N	R	G	V	Y	E	D
C	I	A	S	N	A	L	A	A
U	Y	O	E	I	W	R	C	S
R	O	T	H	L	I	A	H	W
R	A	C	G	D	N	N	L	E
E	S	O	E	D	E	G	T	L
N	B	R	E	A	K	E	R	L
T	D	R	A	P	N	I	P	N
S	W	I	P	E	O	U	T	S

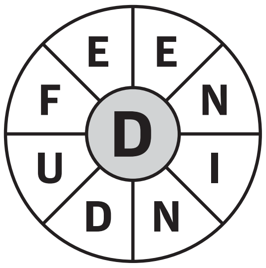
Solution no 16,492

■	S	C	H	I	S	M	■	P	A	B	L	O
■	H	■	A	■	U	■	■	O	■	R	■	B
F	E	R	R	I	C	■	O	R	D	E	A	L
■	L	■	V	■	C	■	■	T	■	A	■	O
S	L	O	E	■	E	M	B	O	L	D	E	N
■	A	■	S	■	S	■	A	■	■	T	■	G
■	C	A	T	A	S	T	R	O	P	H	E	■
S	■	M	■	■	O	■	C	■	O	■	M	■
P	R	E	T	O	R	I	A	■	T	Y	P	O
A	■	N	■	C	■	■	R	■	L	■	E	■
D	R	I	V	E	L	■	O	E	U	V	R	E
E	■	T	■	A	■	■	L	■	C	■	O	■
D	O	Y	E	N	■	B	E	A	K	E	R	■

Word wheel
CONVERTED

Word wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found. TARGET: Excellent-32. Good-27. Average-20.



Pet corner



Which animated sitcom featured a three-eyed fish called Blinky?

a. Family Guy
b. Bob's Burgers
c. The Simpsons
d. Daria
*Answer top right**

Garry Trudeau
Doonesbury

